CHURCH AND MINISTRY
IN THE LIFE AND THOUGHT OF CHARLES G. FINNEY

by

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For Love and Understanding

PREFACE

Contemporary Protestantism has become intensely aware of the "strangeness" of the Church and the changing patterns of its ministry. With this awareness there has come an acute consciousness of the deficiencies of Protestant doctrines of the Church.[1] Indeed, this has become an age in search of the meaning of the Church and ministry. This search, fortified by penetrating ecumenical dialogue, has led to the rediscovery of many elements of our classical Protestant heritage which have long been overlooked. The way to revival and renewal in the Church, however, will not be shown by biblical and theological studies alone; that is, of the type which define Church and ministry in abstract terms.[2] These valuable studies must be reinforced, especially in the American scene, by the kind of self-knowledge that comes from historical studies which trace the sources of formative ideas, revealing those factors, both theological and non-theological, which have shaped the changing patterns of Church and ministry. It is the purpose of this dissertation to contribute to that undertaking.

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[1] Daniel Jenkins, The Strangeness of the Church (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1955), p. 21.

[2] For example: Karl Ludwig Schmidt, The Church, Bible Key Words, from Gerhard Kittel's Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1950); Emil Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of the Church, Faith and Consummation (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962); Dietrich Bonhoeffer, The Communion of Saints, A Dogmatic Inquiry into the Sociology of the Church (New York: Harper & Row, 1964).

This study scrutinizes the Church and ministry in the middle period of American history, 1800 to 1870, in the life and thought of Charles G. Finney (1792-1875), a man whose thinking and doing were so very representative of the period. As a representative figure in this formative period of American Christianity Finney does not provide a systematic and abstract doctrine of the Church and ministry, but rather he reflects in his thought the forces at work in the American culture, forces which were shaping both unity and diversity within the structure of the gradually forming modern denominationalism.

It has been suggested that there has been a significant shift in the field of American history from an emphasis upon the colonial period to a focus upon the so-called middle period, 1800-1870, as "a truly formative period out of which has come the modern America."[3] On this basis Professor Wolf argued that church historians were continuing to emphasize the colonial era when American culture in general was being interpreted in the light of the middle period.[4] He challenged church historians to look at the middle period as the matrix of modern American Christianity. The significance of this "truly formative period" has received greater attention during the past decade by social and intellectual, as well as church, historians.[5]

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[3] Richard C. Wolf, "The Middle Period, 1800-1870, The Matrix of Modern American Christianity," Religion in Life, XXII, No. 1 (1952), 72.

[4] Wolf's analysis of eight significant titles shows that fewer pages were given to the study of the middle and modern periods than to the colonial period in these familiar books. Ibid., passim.

During the middle period there was a climactic juncture in the evangelical synthesis which had been developing since the Great Awakening. It can be observed that the great bulk of American Protestantism adopted an "evangelical" understanding of the Christian faith, which supplanted the more churchly views of the earlier colonial era derived from the Old World traditions.[6] Revivalism, with all of its import for the Church and ministry, was at the very center of this evangelical synthesis; and no man was more significant, or more representative of the era than Charles G. Finney. Although some of his innovations were brought under critical review, the appraisal of a contemporary newspaper seemed to be justified: ". . . that there is a large proportion of American Christians differing from Mr. Finney in his views of Christian perfection, and not ignorant of some evils in his early revival labors, who notwithstanding, regard his life to have been an era in the revival history of America, and his labors, upon the whole, to have been a precious blessing to the cause of God in America."[7]

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[5] Recent studies, since 1952, have undertaken to interpret various movements in the middle period. They provide ever-growing evidence of the viability of Wolf's thesis. For example: William G. McLoughlin, Jr., Modern Revivalism; Charles Grandison Finney to Billy Graham (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1959); Clifford S. Griffin, Their Brothers' Keepers; Moral Stewardship in the United States, 1800-1865 (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1960); Charles I. Foster, An Errand of Mercy; The Evangelical United Front, 1790-1837 (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1960); James Hastings Nichols, Romanticism In American Theology, Nevin and Schaff at Mercersburg (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961). Also it is to be noted that The John Harvard Library of the Belknap Press of Harvard University has published Charles G. Finney, Lectures on Revivals of Religion, (Edited by William G. McLoughlin (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1960); and The Autobiography of Lyman Beecher, Edited by Barbara M. Cross, Two volumes (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1961). In addition to these published works there are a number of significant unpublished doctoral dissertations, which are noted in the bibliography of this thesis.

[6] Cf., Sidney E. Mead, "The Rise of the Evangelical /Conception

This evangelical synthesis was the chief characteristic of the religious ethos of what has been called the "Methodist Age."[8] The pattern of emerging evangelicalism began to take shape in the old revival tradition established by Jonathan Edwards who saw with great and thankful wonderment the "surprising work of God" in the opening phase of the Great Awakening of 1735, which resulted in "the conversion of many hundred

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(Cont.) Conception of the Ministry in America (1607-1850," in H. Richard Niebuhr and Daniel D. Williams (Editors), The Ministry in Historical Perspective (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956), p. 208.

[7] "A Vindication of the Rev. Charles G. Finney," reprinted from The Independent (n.d.), Finney Papers, OCL.

[8] ". . . the Great Awakening which terminated the Puritan and inaugerated the Pietist or Methodist age of American church history." Robert E. Thompson, The History of the Presbyterian Churches in the United States (New York: The Christian Literature Co., 1895), p. 34.

souls in Northampton." The neo-Calvinistic theology of Edwards maintained a theocentric world-view and proclaimed that salvation was granted to the elect only by the sovereign grace of God. This pattern was confronted by the ideals of the Enlightenment which were given notable impetus by the American and French Revolutions. Such ideals as the dignity of man, little trammeled by sin and evil, and the benevolence of God in nature began to modify the strictly held and pessimistic doctrines of the old Calvinism in the minds of the average American. A new climate was being formed during the early phase of the Second Great Awakening in the frontier camp meetings of Kentucky and Tennessee from 1795 to 1810. There Methodist-Arminianism, with its optimism and free-will theology, and Calvinism, with predestination of the elect, were blended together by Methodist, Baptist, and Presbyterian preachers intent upon saving souls. Even in the midst of peculiar emotional excitement, the old revival tradition gave way to a new phase of the emerging evangelicalism in which there was less wonderment concerning a "surprising work of God" and more concern for "carefully organized and pragmatically contrived techniques which Finney was to consolidate into modern mass evangelism."[9]

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[9] William G. McLoughlin, op. cit., p. 12.

The full-flowering of the Second Great Awakening occurred during the years 1825 to 1835, a decade in which the ministry and influence of Finney was decisive. He was a representative figure through whom the dynamic forces of the era seemed to flow as with a characteristic power. William G. McLoughlin has written of Finney:

> He helped to knock the last props from under the old Calvinist system and to establish in its place the Arminianized Calvinism called evangelicalism. In the process he firmly established a coherent rationale for the new tradition of worked-up revivals and securely harnessed the spontaneous, ecclesiastically schismatic force of frontier revivalism to the institutionalized church system in America's rapidly expanding western towns and eastern cities. His work did much to stabilize and unify American evangelical Protestantism and to transform it into a national religion without destroying its zeal for soul winning or its independent denominationalism.[10]

This representative nature of Finney's life and thought was clearly seen by G. Frederick Wright, a colleague of Finney in his later Oberlin years. In the conclusion to his biography Wright wrote:

> In summing up the influence of Finney's life, it is of course difficult, and indeed impossible, to separate it from that of the general agencies with which he cooperated. Necessarily, his work was largely determined by the circumstances of the time in which he lived . . . . His crowning virtue was, that he adjusted himself to surrounding conditions, and concentrated all his marvellous gifts upon the fields of work that from time to time were opened before him.[11]

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[10] Ibid., pp. 12-13.

[11] G. Frederick Wright, Charles Grandison Finney (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1891), p. 287.

If it may be said that Finney's life was representative in its response to the environment and its challenges, it may also be asserted that his thought was representative of an increasingly pervasive normative evangelicalism. Again Wright's appraisal is noteworthy: "Finney's system preserves all the advantages of Arminianism in the pulpit, and all the strength of Calvinism in the closet, and so has been one of the most efficient means of looking to that doctrinal agreement now so rapidly approaching between the great religious denominations of this country."[12]

Finney was dramatically concerned with the renewal of the Church and the ministry. He played a primary role in harnessing the dynamism of revivals to universal, benevolent reform; and during his Oberlin years, following 1835, he became one of the chief spokesmen for the perfectionist movement in the Church. Theodore Weld recognized Finney's concern for the Church and ministry when he wrote to Lewis Tappan, "Finney feels about revivals of religion and the promotion of the Church and ministry in doctrines and measures just as you and I do about anti-slavery."[13] However, although Finney was ostensibly opposed to the forces of secularism operative in the

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[12] Ibid., p. 318.

[13] Weld to Lewis Tappan, November 17, 1835, Barnes and Dumond, Weld-Grimke Letters, I (New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1934), 242.

middle period, which tended to dominate American culture after 1860, he nevertheless participated as a representative figure in the evangelical segment of American Christianity which was broadly open to secular influences.[14] The alignment of evangelicalism and the democratic faith tended toward a synthesis during the theological transition from piety to moralism, to secularism.[15] Hence, American evangelical Protestantism in the middle period was transformed into a kind of national church so broadly socialized that it tended to become a "culture-Protestantism" undifferentiated from the American way of life. The complex nature of this transformation will be seen as it relates to the nature of the Church and ministry in the life and thought of Charles G. Finney.

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[14] "At few times in our history has the distinction between the religious and the secular been as clouded as in the three decades before the Civil War. Public men brought sectarian judgments and theological compulsions to bear upon their decisions. To no less a degree did churches and churchmen pursue secular issues in their councils with evangelical vigor and assurances of piety." Wilson Smith, Professors and Public Ethics; Studies of Northern Moral Philosophers before the Civil War (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1956), p. 3.

[15] The pattern of theological transition toward secularism was frequently noted in criticisms of Finney and others. A general statement of the transition may be seen in the following:

"But there is a class of theories, speculative and connected, in regular gradation. They commence with the first principle of Pelagian heresy and terminate with the last sweep of Unitarian blasphemy. The first step in this philosophy is the self-determining power of the human will, and the last is the entire sufficiency of human reason to guide men in duty and in the way to life and happiness. The first commences by bringing metaphysical philosophy to aid the revelation of God, and the last closes by setting aside the whole authority and spirit of revelation." "Character of the Present Age," Biblical Repertory and Theological Review, II (1830), 384.

In Part One of this study the life and thought of Charles G. Finney is presented, from the early years of the "western revivals" to his settlement as a pastor in New York City. The culmination of these years of revival labor, with all the controversy over his "new measures" for promoting revivals, was his Lectures on Revivals of Religion, published in 1835. Part Two analyses his view of the Church as a reform association and as a holy community; also, his liturgical and pastoral theology are discussed. Finney's removal to Oberlin in 1835 was the dividing line in his life and thought which distinguishes the two parts of this study. At Oberlin, the distinctive doctrines of "natural ability" and "disinterested benevolence," which informed his revival and reform ministry, were extended to envelop the doctrine of "entire, permanent sanctification." A biographical excursus in Chapter VIII presents, briefly, his two notable trips to England, and the closing years of his life.

A debt of gratitude is here acknowledged to the staffs of several libraries whose cordial assistance has made the research for this study a pleasure; namely, the staffs of Oberlin College Library, Princeton Theological Seminary Library, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary Library, the Library of Congress, the Presbyterian Historical Society, and the Cambridge University Library. The friendly assistance of the librarians at the Muskingum College Library is also acknowledged.

A deeply felt appreciation must be expressed to the committee of scholars which has guided me through the doctoral program at Princeton Theological Seminary: namely, Professors Lefferts A. Loetscher, Samuel W. Blizzard, Edward A. Dowey, Jr., and Hugh T. Kerr. It is Dr. Loetscher who opened the field of American Church History to my inquiring mind; and Dr. Blizzard who demonstrated the relevance of sociological theory and methodology for the analysis of religious phenomena. It is Dr. Dowey and Dr. Kerr who quickened my awareness of theological systems. To these men I owe much. Further, it is a pleasure to acknowledge the encouragement given me by Dr. Howard V. Evans, the Dean of Muskingum College, who has promoted summer research grants for the striving doctoral candidate, and helped adjust his schedule with the aid of the chairman of my department, Dr. Russell S. Hutchison. Finally, I want it to be known that my father, Lester W. McClelland, and my mother, Mildred R. McClelland, and my friend, William A. Mercer, have aided me in countless ways, immeasurably beyond anything I should have expected, or deserved.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

PREFACE iii

INTRODUCTION: AN AWAKENED FINNEY 1

PART ONE. FINNEY AS AN INNOVATOR: THE NEW MEASURES

I. THE THEOLOGY OF "MEANS" 36

II. THE CALL OF TWO FRONTIERS 98

III. FINNEY ON THE URBAN FRONTIER 130

IV. THE CHURCH AND MINISTRY IN THE MIDST OF REVIVALS. . 201

PART TWO. FINNEY'S VIEW OF THE CHURCH AND MINISTRY

V. THE CHURCH AS A REFORM ASSOCIATION 251

VI. THE CHURCH AS A HOLY COMMUNITY 326

VII. THE CHURCH AND ITS WORSHIP 395

VIII. THE CHURCH AND ITS MINISTRY 469

CONCLUSION: IMAGES OF THE CHURCH AND MINISTRY . . 554

APPENDIX 567

BIBLIOGRAPHY 639

INTRODUCTION

AN AWAKENED FINNEY

A. Brought Up Mostly in the Woods

Charles Grandison Finney was born in Warren, Connecticut on August 29, 1792. He was the seventh son of Sylvester Finney, a member of an old Massachusetts family and a veteran of the Revolutionary War.[1] When he was about two years old his family migrated from Litchfield County to Oneida County in central New York. There he grew up and completed the rather primitive schooling provided in such a backwoods community. Finney went on to Hamilton Oneida Academy at Clinton, New York, for two years, probably from 1806 to 1808. The Academy was located only a few miles from the family farm in Oneida County and was destined to be incorporated as Hamilton College in 1812.[2] There Finney was encouraged to pursue a classical

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1. Genealogical data may be found in Franklin C. Clark, The Bristol Branch of the Finney Family (Boston: New England Historical and Genealogical Society, n.d.). The chief sources for Finney's early life are: Memoirs of Reverend Charles G. Finney, Written by Himself (New York: A. S. Barnes Co., 1876); George Frederick Wright, Charles Grandison Finney (Boston & New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1891); William C. Cochran, Charles G. Finney: Memorial Address (Philadelphia: printed for private circulation by J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1908); Robert S. Fletcher, A History of Oberlin College, 2 vols., (Oberlin: Oberlin College, 1943).

2. Frank Grenville Beardsley, A Mighty Winner of Souls, Charles G. Finney; A Study in Evangelism (New York: American Tract Society, 1937), p. 12.

education by Seth Norton, who continued a professor at Hamilton College, and to appreciate music. He learned to play the bass viol ('cello) and became acquainted with Thomas Hastings, one of his classmates, who was later to contribute his musical gifts and training in association with Finney.[3]

In 1808 the Finney family moved to Henderson in Jefferson County, near Sackett's Harbor. There, at Henderson, Charles taught in the rural school for four years (1808-1812) with more than a little success. Testimonials from some of his pupils were printed in a memorial address given by Finney's grandson, William C. Cochran, which indicated that he was indeed the "idol of his pupils." He joined in all sports with them, he wrestled with them; yet, in school he kept strict discipline. One of his students recalled: "Should any boy attempt to create a disturbance, one flash of Mr. Finney's eye would quell the sinner at once. Oh, I tell you, they all loved and worshipped him, and all felt that some day he would be a great man."[4]

Sackett's Harbor, a few miles from Finney's home, was made into a naval base at the outbreak of war with England in 1812. A fort was erected and several companies of soldiers, along with local militia, were stationed there in case of an invasion from Canada. Finney reported to enlist in the Navy, and while he was in Sackett's Harbor he was accosted by a woman of the street which, along with the profanity and crudeness he encountered, led him to return home as soon as possible.[5]

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[3] L. Nelson Nichols, The History of Broadway Tabernacle of New York City (New Haven: The Tuttle, Morehouse & Taylor Co., 1940), p. 43.

[4] Cochran, op. cit., p. 24.

In the fall of 1812 Finney's family sent him back east to Warren, Connecticut, to continue his education in the academy preparatory to entering Yale College. He studied several books of Virgil, Cicero's orations, the Greek New Testament, and some Hebrew. "But," he recalled, "I was never a classical scholar, and never possessed so much knowledge of the ancient languages as to think myself capable of independently criticising our English translation of the Bible."[6] After two years he desired to go on to Yale College but his preceptor, himself a Yale graduate, encouraged him not to go as he believed that Finney could complete the curriculum in two years with his present rate of progress whereas it would cost him four years at the college. However, he failed to pursue his education any further at that time.[7]

During this time in Warren, Connecticut, Finney stayed in the home of one of his uncles. For the first time in his

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5. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

6. Finney, *Memoirs*, p. 5.

7. *Ibid.*

life he came under the stated ordinances of a church and listened to the preaching of an educated minister, the Reverend Peter Starr. George F. Wright records that the preaching style of that day was not attractive to the aspiring young man, "and he seems to have been unfavorably impressed by it."[8] Further, it is to be noted that at this time his uncle encouraged him to become a member of the local Masonic Lodge. He passed through the various stages and was raised to the "Sublime degree of Master Mason."[9] Upon his move to Adams, New York, he "demitted" to the Masonic Lodge there. Later in life, Finney was to become very active in the anti-Masonic movement.

Leaving Warren in 1814 or 1815 he taught school in New Jersey for two years. There, again, he was without positive religious influence as there was no preaching in the community except in the German language.[10] He planned to continue his private study and teach in the south but his mother's illness prevented him, so he began to study law in the office of Benjamin Wright in the town of Adams, Jefferson County, New York, where he was within a few miles of home. This was in 1818. In due time he was admitted to the bar and entered into the practice of his profession.[11] There in Adams he became associated with the church under the ministry of a young Presbyterian minister recently graduated from Princeton Seminary, the Reverend George W. Gale. There is an interesting appraisal of Finney as a student of law in Squire Wright's office in the "Autobiography of Rev. George W. Gale."

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[8] Wright, op. cit., p. 4.

[9] Beardsley, op. cit., pp. 15-16.

[10] Wright, op. cit., p. 4.

[11] Finney, Memoirs, pp. 5-7.

> When I was preaching at Adams before my settlement, he was in the office of Wright and Wardell, a student of law, where he continued till his conversion in the fall of 1821. He was expecting at the time of his conversion to be licensed soon in the Supreme Court. He could have been licensed some two or three years before according to the usages, or laws, of the State in the Court of Common Pleas, but he did not choose to do so. He had all the business he wanted, and that was enough to support him, in the Justice Courts. He preferred having all the time he could for study. He was a good student and had attained a knowledge of the law, it is said, which many practitioners had not attained in that section of the country and often when meeting them, as his opponents in Justice Courts was more than a match for them.[12]

In 1821 Finney was twenty-nine years of age, full of physical and intellectual vivacity; he was an exceedingly attractive young man. William C. Cochran described him as being at this time a "splendid pagan--a young man rejoicing in his strength, proudly conscious of his physical and intellectual superiority to all around him."[13] He was six feet and two inches tall, weighed one hundred and eighty-five pounds, and was extremely popular because of his athletic ability, his dancing, and his somewhat developed talent for playing the cello. He was a leader among the young people, yet as he recalled his religious state at that time: "I had been brought up mostly in the woods. I had very little regard to the Sabbath, and had no definite knowledge of religious truth."[14]

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[12] "Autobiography of Rev. George W. Gale," written for his children, typewritten manuscript at Knox College Library, Galesburg, Illinois, quoted in James E. Johnson, "The Life of Charles Grandison Finney," (typed Ph.D. dissertation, Syracuse University, 1959), p. 11.

[13] Cochran, _op_. _cit_., p. 13.

Up to the time of his move to Adams, Finney had not been confronted with the influence of an educated ministry to any degree. His experience at Warren had been unsatisfactory, but at Adams he associated himself with the congregation of the Reverend George W. Gale and became the director of the church choir. He must have been a considerable trial to Mr. Gale because he continued his critical, almost scornful, attitude toward Christianity. "On one occasion," he wrote in his Memoirs, "when I was in one of the prayer-meetings, I was asked if I did not desire that they should pray for me. I told them, no; because I did not see that God answered their prayers."[15] There was to be a radical change in this situation with Finney's serious introduction to the Bible in 1821 and the beginnings of an awakening in Adams, both of which events were to be highlighted by the dramatic conversion experience of Charles G. Finney and his call to become a preacher of the Gospel.

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[14] Finney, Memoirs, p. 7.

[15] Ibid., p. 10.

B. Conversion: In the Wilderness a Radical Experimental Religion

When Charles G. Finney began the study of law in the office of Squire Benjamin Wright in Adams, Jefferson County, New York, he was a vivacious despiser of religion. His parents had not been professors of religion, and never having "enjoyed what might be called religious privileges," as he later recalled, "I was almost as ignorant of religion as a heathen."[16] This is not to say that he had not darkened the doors of the church with his passing shadow. In the wilderness of Oneida County, New York, as a boy, he had occasionally heard a sermon "from some travelling minister, of some miserable holding forth of an ignorant preacher who would sometimes be found in that country." The chief reward of such occasions seems to have been the hilarity enjoyed as the people "would return from meeting and spend a considerable time in irrepressible laughter at the strange mistakes which had been made and the absurdities which had been advanced."[17] Then there was the aged clergyman in Warren, Connecticut, the Reverend Peter Starr, whom Finney recalled from his days in high school there.

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16. Finney, Memoirs, pp. 6, 7.

17. Ibid., pp. 4-5.

Although venerated by his people, he "read his sermons in a manner that left no impression" upon Finney, except with regard to his novel method of delivery. The measure of boredom and merriment is little reduced in his later recollection:

> To give some idea of his preaching, let me say that his manuscript sermons were just large enough to put into a small Bible. I sat in the gallery, and observed that he placed his manuscript in the middle of his Bible, and inserted his fingers at the places where were to found the passages of Scripture to be quoted in the reading of his sermon. This made it necessary to hold his Bible in both hands, and rendered all gesticulation with his hands impossible. As he proceeded he would read the passages of Scripture where his fingers were inserted, and thus liberate one finger after another until the fingers of both hands were read out of their places. When his fingers were all read out, he was near the close of the sermon. His reading was altogether unimpassioned and monotonous; and although the people attended very closely and reverentially to his reading, yet, I must confess, it was to me not much like preaching.[18]

During the time he was teaching in New Jersey, prior to coming to Adams, Finney's lack of religious privileges was little aided by the preaching in the neighborhood; it was chiefly in German.[19] Therefore, the arrival of the Reverend George W. Gale, fresh out of Princeton Theological Seminary, in 1819 to become the pastor of the North Congregational Church of Adams was an event worth noting. A series of events now unfolded which were to lead to the awakening and conversion

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18. Ibid., p. 6.

19. Ibid., p. 7.

of the young lawyer, Finney. He entered into the life of the church in Adams, which must have taken on considerable vitality under the leadership of the new pastor. The church had apparently been operating under the guidance of the Plan of Union as a "Presbygational" church. It belonged to the Presbytery of St. Lawrence, and as was frequently the case among Plan of Union churches, it became known as a Presbyterian church under the leadership of an energetic Presbyterian pastor.[20] Finney became the director of the church choir, played his 'cello, and was immensely popular with the young people of the church and community. But he continued his critical, perhaps scornful, attitude toward Christianity.

The Reverend George W. Gale was an orthodox Presbyterian minister in doctrine and doubtless tuned to the Calvinist instrument played upon at Princeton Seminary. As do many educated young preachers, he took too much for granted and assumed that his hearers knew the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel. Finney wrote that his preaching was of the old school type (hyper-calvinism), and that he "was rather perplexed than edified by his preaching."[21] But he went to church, and he went to the stated prayer meeting as often as he could con-

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20. Cf. James E. Johnson, "The Life of Charles Grandison Finney," (typed Ph.D. dissertation, Syracuse University, June, 1959), pp. 14-15.

21. Finney, Memoirs, p. 7.

veniently leave his office. Also, the pastor was in the habit of stopping by the law office frequently and Finney remembers that he conversed with him freely; "and I now think that I sometimes criticised his sermons unmercifully," he wrote.[22] Gale had many discussions with Finney concerning the truths of religion, but they always appeared to be fruitless. In fact, Gale became so discouraged in attempts to win him that, according to Finney's early biographer, "when some one proposed in church meeting to make Finney a subject of prayer, Mr. Gale remarked that it was of no use; that he did not believe that Finney would ever be converted, . . . adding, also, that the choir was so much under Finney's influence that it was doubtful if they could be converted while their leader remained in Adams."[23]

Until the autumn of 1821, when Finney was twenty-nine years of age, he remained a case of retarded religious development; and then things began to change. Under the guidance of Benjamin Wright he had read enough Blackstone to gain admission to the bar and was entered upon a promising legal career. As he studied his elementary law, Finney discovered that the old authors frequently quoted the scriptures, especially the

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[22] Ibid., p. 8.

[23] Wright, op. cit., p. 5.

Mosaic institutions, as authority for many of the great principles of common law.[24] This excited his curiosity so much that he purchased a Bible, the first he had ever owned, and when he found a reference to the Bible in his reading of the law he turned to it and read it carefully. This reading of the Bible caused Finney to become very restless concerning the Christian religion. He conversed frequently with Gale about the meaning of important theological terms: What did he mean by repentance? What did he mean by faith? What was sanctification? As one reads Finney's account of this inquiry in his Memoirs it is apparent that he is writing after the manner of the theological debate which marked his later career,[25] but there is no reason to question the general configuration of his religious quest--it was typical of one immersed in the Puritan heritage. He wrote:

> But as I read my Bible and attended the prayer meetings, heard Mr. Gale preach, and conversed with him, with the elders of the church, and with others from time to time, I became very restless. A little consideration convinced me that I was by no means in a state of mind to go to heaven if I should die. It seemed to me that there must be something in religion that was of infinite importance; and it was soon settled with me, that if the soul was immortal I needed a great change in my inward state to be prepared for happiness in heaven. But still my

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[24] Finney, Memoirs, p. 7.

[25] Ibid., p. 8.

> mind was not made up as to the truth or falsehood of the Gospel and of the Christian religion. The question, however, was of too much importance to allow me to rest in any uncertainty on the subject.[26]

His spiritual sensitivities were quickened and he was not a little irritated by the direct concern for his conversion which many manifested. He was asked in one of the prayer meetings if he did not desire that prayer should be made for him; his response was no, because he did not see that God answered their prayers. His recollection of that conversation was that he said, "I suppose I need to be prayed for, for I am conscious that I am a sinner; but I do not see that it will do any good for you to pray for me; for you are continually asking, but you do not receive. . . . You have been praying for the Holy Spirit to descend upon yourselves, and yet complaining of your leanness."[27] Finney was face to face with the question whether to accept Christ as presented in the Gospel, or to continue in his alien way.

Finney's narrative of his conversion to Christ in the Memoirs is of the utmost significance for the understanding of his life and thought. It is a classic of the type of evangelical conversion experience which records in detail the introspection, the psychological state of the subject, the time and place, and the results of receiving "a mighty baptism of the Holy Ghost."[28] The conversion narrative bears a profound resemblance to the characteristic Puritan diaries of those pilgrims in the wilderness whose hands and minds were constantly inspecting their spiritual pulse. Yet, his conversion was clearly of the evangelical type, markedly different from that anticipated through the stated means of grace adhered to by the Calvinist church and ministry of his day. To be sure, the narrative implies the theological system which Finney defended in his later life and there is no reason to believe that it came forth from his mind full-grown at this time, yet it cannot be doubted that the critical struggles of his awakening not only initiated him into the Christian life and ministry but also exerted a direct influence upon the subsequent labors for the conversion of men and upon the formulation of his theological system.[29]

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[26] Ibid., p. 9.

[27] Ibid., p. 10.

"On a Sabbath evening in the autumn of 1821," begins Finney, "I made up my mind that I would settle the question of my soul's salvation at once, that if it were possible I would make my peace with God."[30] He resolved to give himself wholly to the work of securing salvation, laying aside all other business. During Monday and Tuesday he had the opportunity to read the Bible and engage in prayer for most of the time. His narrative traces the recollected introspection: his unwillingness to have anyone know of his religious crisis, his whispered prayers, his covert reading of the Bible, his careful avoidance of the minister and others who might sense his condition. "I was ashamed," he wrote, "to let them know how I felt, on the one hand; and on the other, I was afraid they would misdirect me. I felt myself shut up to the Bible."[31] As his convictions increased, he found that he could not pray. He became very nervous, and had forebodings of death and hell during the restless nights. On Wednesday morning as he walked to his office he experienced an illumination of Gospel salvation. An inward voice said to him, "What are you waiting for? Did you not promise to give your heart to God? And what are you trying to do? Are you endeavoring to work out a righteousness of your own?"[32] He recalls that he saw clearly at that very moment "the reality and fulness of the atonement of Christ. I saw that his work was a finished work; and that instead of having, or needing, any righteousness of my own to recommend me to God, I had to submit myself to the righteousness of God through Christ."[33] The crisis was upon him as he stopped in the street, the inward voice arresting him: "Will you accept it now, today?" He responded, "Yes; I will accept it to-day, or I will die in the attempt."[34]

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[28] Cf. Ibid., pp. 12-23.

[29] Cpr. Wright, op. cit., pp. 6-7.

[30] Finney, Memoirs, p. 12.

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[31] Ibid., p. 13.

[32] Ibid., p. 14.

Finney's reason had grasped the finished work of the atonement of Christ, and now he must by an act of volition accept it as he wrestled with God, and himself, in the wilderness. There is in this narrative a portrayal of Finney's Puritan heritage overlaid by evangelical elements which were to dominate his theological and practical labors as a minister of the Gospel. Robert E. Thompson has written that, "Puritanism, by its excessive individualism, broke up society into its constituent elements, leaving each 'face to face with God in the wilderness.'"[35] Literally, as well as figuratively, Finney now turned his steps toward the woods. Penetrating the wilderness he found a place of seclusion where he knelt down for prayer, vowing to give his heart to God or never to come down from there. Despair mounted as he discovered that he could not pray; his heart was "dead to God." He deplored the rashness of his promise, "that I would give my heart to God that day or die in the attempt." Even in this seclusion he wrestled with the pride of heart which restrained him lest someone should discover him upon his knees. Overwhelmed, he cried out, broken before the Lord. Then he heard God's word.

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[33] Ibid., p. 14.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Robert E. Thompson, The History of the Presbyterian Churches in the United States (New York: The Christian Literature Co., 1895), p. 96.

> Just at that point this passage of Scripture seemed to drop into my mind with a flood of light: "Then shall ye go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. Then shall ye seek me and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." I instantly seized hold of this with my heart. I had intellectually believed the Bible before; but never had the truth been in my mind that faith was a voluntary trust instead of an intellectual state. I was as conscious as I was of my existence, of trusting at that moment in God's veracity. Somehow I knew that that was a passage of Scripture, though I do not think that I had ever read it. I knew that it was God's word, and God's voice, as it were, that spoke to me. I cried to Him, "Lord, I take thee at thy word. Now thou knowest that I do search for thee with all my heart, and that I have come here to pray to thee; and thou hast promised to hear me."[36]

Other promises came to him as he continued thus to pray until his mind was so full that the question of conversion no longer rose to his thoughts. As he returned to the road, he recalls that he vowed, "If I am ever converted, I will preach the Gospel."[37]

Thus, on October tenth, 1821, Finney returned to Adams and his office filled with a "profound spiritual tranquillity."

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[36] Finney, Memoirs, p. 16.

[37] Ibid., p. 17.

Without appetite to eat, he took down his 'cello and began to play and sing some familiar pieces of sacred music, but he was overcome with emotion and could not continue. Later on in the evening, after Squire Wright had bid him goodnight, he rushed into a back room of the office to pray. Again, he was visited with a mystical experience which he vividly recalled:

> There was no fire, and no light, in the room; nevertheless it appeared to me as if it were perfectly light. As I went in and shut the door after me, it seemed as if I met the Lord Jesus Christ face to face. It did not occur to me then, nor did it for some time afterward, that it was wholly a mental state. On the contrary it seemed to me that I saw him as I would see any other man. He said nothing, but looked at me in such a manner as to break me right down at his feet. I have always since regarded this as a most remarkable state of mind; for it seemed to me a reality, that he stood before me, and I fell down at his feet and poured out my soul to him.[38]

After a time he returned to the front office, and as he turned to take a seat by the fire he received "a mighty baptism of the Holy Ghost." Without any such expectation, Finney recalls, "the Holy Spirit descended upon me in a manner that seemed to go through me, body and soul. I could feel the impression, like a wave of electricity, going through and through me. Indeed it seemed to come in waves and waves of liquid love; . . . like the very breath of God . . . it seemed to fan me, like immense wings."[39] The baptism continued to roll over him until he could bear no more. This mystical experience with its peculiar mental state, its visions, auditions, and emotional catharsis, manifests the spiritual sensitivity which marked Finney's life. He had similar experiences from time to time, but was not given to relating them in public. What he stressed was the process of awakening, conviction, appropriation of Biblical promises literally interpreted, and the free volitional act of acceptance. In the state of spiritual baptism he learned the doctrine of justification as a present experience. He saw that the moment he believed, there in the woods, all sense of condemnation dropped from his mind. "My sense of guilt was gone," he wrote, "my sins were gone; and I do not think I felt any more sense of guilt than if I never had sinned."[40] Finney's radical conversion was of the type which informed evangelical revivalism. It did not conform to the traditional and churchly use of the means of grace; nor was it received under the impetus of a revival ministry. The sense of mysticism, experienced justification, led Finney into the ministry of the Gospel as a proponent of radical experimental religion.

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[38] Ibid., p. 20.

[39] Ibid.

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[40] *Ibid.*, p. 23.

C. Response: A Novice Preacher of Enthusiastic Religion Under Presbyterian Auspices

Charles Grandison Finney had met his God and had been wonderfully converted. The next morning he went to his office and experienced anew the "mighty waves of love and salvation" flowing over him. Squire Wright came into the office and Finney spoke to him, to his great astonishment, on the subject of his salvation. Finney recalled in his Memoirs that Wright made no reply at the time, but dropped his head and left the office. "I thought no more of it then," Finney wrote, "but afterward found that the remark I made pierced him like a sword; and he did not recover from it till he was converted." Soon afterwards a Deacon of the church came into the office and said, "Mr. Finney, do you recollect that my cause is to be tried at ten o'clock this morning? I suppose you are ready?"[41] Finney's response is a classic: he said, "Deacon B_____, I have a retainer from the Lord Jesus Christ to plead his cause, and I cannot plead yours."[42] This immediate and decisive response was a life-long commitment to the Christian ministry.

For a time Finney walked up and down the streets of Adams like an ecstatic prophet of old, seeking all or any to whom he might speak for conversion to the Kingdom of God. He fasted, held prayer-vigils, and continued to experience mystic visions and baptisms of the Spirit. He took special concern for the young people with whom he had been associated in the choir program of the church and with peculiar success brought them to repentance and conversion. This fervor, however, was soon diverted to theological studies and the preparation for the ministry.

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[41] Ibid., p. 24.

[42] Ibid.

There is little material available for us to use in the reconstruction of the activities and developments during the months directly following his conversion. Finney exercised his "retainer from the Lord" in personal witness in Adams and the surrounding district, and during a brief visit to his parents in Henderson happily achieved their conversion. There appears to have been a little flurry of Universalist activity in the area which Finney zealously put down.[43] There was a general quickening of religious concern, and Finney became a member of the Adams church. During this same period he held many long conversations with his pastor, the Reverend Mr. Gale, who encouraged him to prepare for the ministry. He boarded with Gale and became a novice in religion and Biblical studies.

In conformity with Presbyterian practice, Finney was formally taken under the care of the Presbytery of St. Lawrence on June 25, 1823; and in December of 1823, the Presbytery was called together in Adams to license Finney to preach the gospel.[44] When taken under the care of Presbytery, he was encouraged to pursue his theological education at Princeton Theological Seminary. Finney declined on the basis of lack of economic resources, but when the presbyters offered to underwrite his expenses he forthrightly indicated that he did not wish to come under the religious influences which had informed their Calvinistic views.[45] The Reverend G. W. Gale, and the Reverend George Boardman of Watertown, N.Y., were appointed to supervise his studies. The weight of this responsibility fell upon Gale who generously offered his library and time to Finney's studies.

The Reverend Mr. Gale's divinity student must have been a trial and challenge for the young pastor. He was a grown man, educationally and culturally self-reliant, and the possessor of notable gifts which had been sharpened by his training in the legal profession. G. Frederick Wright, his early biographer, has described the several gifts of Finney.[46] Nature had endowed him with a robust physique which enabled him

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[43] Cf. Ibid., pp. 26, 38, 40f., 48f.

[44] Cf. P. H. Fowler, Historical Sketch of Presbyterianism Within the Bounds of the Synod of Central New York (Utica: Curtiss and Childs, 1877), p. 258.

[45] Finney, Memoirs, pp. 45-46.

[46] Wright, op. cit., pp. 18-19.

to live a rigorous life. His height and grace of movement gave him a commanding appearance. His voice was clear with a wide range and flexibility which he used effectively in speaking and argumentation. "As a speaker," Wright states, "he was entirely without mannerism; his intonations and emphasis were perfect, and the hearer never felt, till near the close, that he was listening to a powerful sermon, but rather that he was being personally addressed with much earnestness upon matters that were of great mutual concern."[47] The rugged years of his early pioneer life had given him certain manly skills which were valuable contributions to his character. He was an expert horseman and an accurate marksman; and hunting continued to be a favorite diversion into his later years. His life along the shores of Lake Ontario made him familiar with sailing vessels which gave relevance to the illustrations which he often introduced into his sermons from maritime life. His self-education was marked with a taste for good literature, especially Shakespeare, and he delighted to participate in dramatic readings of the Bard's great plays. Especially noteworthy was the discipline of mind that he had achieved in his legal studies and that broad knowledge of general principles which marked his analysis of theological problems.

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[47] Ibid., p. 18.

It is clear, then, that in spite of limited formal education he did not enter the ministry without intellectual training. His personal gifts and legal training were converted to the use of the Christian ministry.

> The legal profession had already furnished a considerable part of the requisite preparatory discipline. His thorough study of elementary law in connection with the Bible had made him familiar with the ethics of theology. He had, besides, in the handling of cases gained the power of analysis, or argumentation, and appeal, all which are as needful in the pulpit as at the bar; and, specially, he had already learned how to address men. He had studied the art of persuasion while facing juries. All his legal skill was converted, when he was converted, to the higher end of preaching; and none who ever heard him preach could have failed to see that he owed much of his success to the free use which he made in the pulpit of the argumentative, conversational, direct, persuasive mode of address which he had cultivated at the bar.[48]

The lack of formal ministerial training in college and seminary, however, became a characteristic of the evangelist in popular American religion. After Finney there were no popular evangelists who were graduates of first class colleges, universities, or seminaries.[49] A second characteristic of Finney which was to become a hallmark of the evangelistic ministry was his persistent and literal use of the Bible. He shut himself up with the Bible for hours, frequently reading for long periods on his knees in the posture of prayer for divine guidance. Always he interpreted the scriptures with the organizational powers of his legal mind and with a literalness that clearly ignored biblical criticism and confessional formulations. His frequent conversations with his tutor on doctrinal matters were marked by an utter dependence upon his subjective and untutored reading of the Bible. A third characteristic was his aversion to the strictures of the predestinarian hyper-Calvinism with which Gale attempted to influence him. The idea that the atonement was made for the elect alone, and that every man was dependent upon God for the ability to repent was completely alien to Finney's Yankee personality. In spite of the special pleading of Gale that he should "probably land in infidelity" if he continued to reason against the Princeton views of these matters, Finney held his ground: "I cannot embrace these views come what will. I cannot believe they are taught in the Bible."[50] He believed that the sinner was able to repent, and had the manifest duty to repent immediately. When this gospel fisherman threw out his net for sinners he expected to draw it in full every time. The arguments Finney had with Gale were largely along the lines of the growing cleavage, which soon became pronounced and hostile, between the Old School and New School parties in the

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[48] Hiram Mead, "Charles G. Finney," Congregational Quarterly, XIX (1877), p. 6.

[49] By "popular evangelists" is meant those who followed an itinerant ministry using the techniques of mass evangelism established by Finney. Many candidates for the ministry, during the 19th century, were tutored by a pastor. What is indicated here is the non-churchly trend in the training of the revivalists.

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[50] Finney, Memoirs, pp. 46, 47.

Presbyterian and Congregational churches.

When the Presbytery of St. Lawrence met in Adams, December 1823, to examine Finney for licensure to preach the Gospel they were confronted by a man whose background and theology were quite different from the usual candidate. Finney's recollection of the event was that, "In the course of my examination they avoided asking any such questions as would naturally bring my views into collision with theirs."[51] When they asked if he received the confession of faith of the Presbyterian church, he replied that he had not examined it for it had been no part of his study. He did affirm, however, that he "received it for substance of doctrine so far as I understood it."[52] That Presbytery sustained his trial for licensure, and that the confession and catechism had not been part of his study with Gale, can be understood only in the light of conjecture. A popular revival was under way within the bounds of presbytery and Finney had already indicated his ability to arrest the attention of men and women in and about Adams to bring them to Christ. To dispute the authenticity of Finney's gifts and calling would be to dispute the authenticity of the revivals. Finney's affinities with popular revivalism were already coming into focus; so, the choice confronting Presbytery seemed to be orthodox and empty churches, or compromise and full churches. It must have been abundantly clear to Gale, and to others, that Finney would not submit to the yoke of the "traditions of the elders," else he would have most certainly pursued a course of instruction in the confession and catechism. On the basis of these conjectures, plus the fact that there was a crying need for a committed ministry along the frontiers, we may believe that we have some insight into the licensing of Finney, and the larger problem of acquiring a suitable ministry for the church in those days.

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[51] Ibid., p. 51. Note that Finney gives March 1824 as the date of this meeting of Presbytery. Fowler (see footnote 44 above) gives the earlier date, December 1823, based on Presbytery documents.

[52] Ibid., p. 51.

On March 17, 1824, three months after he was licensed to preach, Finney received a commission from the Female Missionary Society of the Western District of the State of New York. It read:

> We the Committee of Missions for the Female Missionary Society of the Western District of the state of New York: appoint Mr. Charles G. Finney a Missionary to labor in the Northern parts of the County of Jefferson and in other destitute Places in that vicinity as his discretion shall dictate: and we hereby cordially recommend him to the kind hospitality of those for whose spiritual interests he undertakes this service of love.
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> This Commission may extend to three months, and perhaps we may then be able to give Mr. Finney another Commission for a longer or shorter term as shall then be judged proper.[53]

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[53] This commission is among the Finney Papers in the Oberlin College Library (OCL); dated Utica, March 17, 1824.

The novice preacher strode into the hinterlands of Jefferson County, and soon the "destitute places" along the Ontario frontier named Evans Mills and Antwerp, two little villages about eighteen miles apart, were introduced to Finney's kind of resolute and enthusiastic religion.

Finney preached alternately from week to week in these two localities. In Evans Mills the services were held in the stone school house shared by Baptists and Congregationalists. After a couple of weeks the people were very much interested, and there was public hope of a revival in that place. During a week of evening meetings Finney began to cast his net; he confronted them with their obligation "at once to become Christians." They had expressed their interest in his preaching and had admitted that he was preaching the Gospel. They professed to believe it; Finney began to pull on the lines. "Now I must know your minds, and I want that you who have made up your minds to become Christians, and will give your pledge to make your peace with God immediately, should rise up; and that, on the contrary, those of you who are resolved that you will not become Christians, and wish me so to understand, and wish Christ so to understand, should sit still." Having made this very clear to them, Finney called upon those who were ready to immediately make their peace with God to rise up. Those who were committed not to accept Christ were to sit still.

As no one moved, the novice preacher waited a few moments, then resumed the attack. "Then you are committed. You have taken your stand. You have rejected Christ and his Gospel; and ye are witnesses one against the other, and God is witness against you all."[54] Stunned and angered by this hard pressed attack, Finney recalled that the people arose en masse and started for the door. His parting remark to the retreating people was, "I am sorry for you; and will preach to you once more, the Lord willing, tomorrow night."[55]

The Congregationalists were confounded by this display, but a Baptist Deacon encouraged Finney; they spent the next day in fasting and prayer together. The townspeople were angered: they were threatening to tar and feather Finney, then ride him hence upon a rail; but they were also greatly fascinated to see what would happen that evening. The meeting house was crammed when Finney arose, and without any singing, or other introduction, he announced his text and began to speak with such effect that, as he put it, "it was like opening a battery upon them." Many could not hold up their heads, and one woman slumped into the arms of friends and remained in a speechless state for sixteen hours before she became conscious and confessed her new-found conversion. As the meetings progressed at Evans Mills many were brought under a state of conviction. There was an old man there who was the village "infidel," and "a great railer at religion." His opposition and excitement were so great that he died in a fit of apoplexy at breakfast, stammering "Don't let Finney pray over my corpse." Such an event removed the last of his opposition in that place. During one of the meetings in this revival a Universalist, who was enraged because his wife had become a convert, had come with a loaded pistol ready to kill Finney. In the middle of the sermon he fell to the floor shrieking that he was sinking into hell. The next day Finney discovered that he had left early in the morning to pray in the woods. Later, he met Finney in the street with a glow on his face and a hope for conversion in his heart.

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[54] Finney, Memoirs, p. 63.

[55] Ibid., p. 64.

During the revival at Evans Mills he met Father Nash again, an old minister who had prayed at the meeting of presbytery at which he was licensed. An eye infection made it impossible for Father Nash to read or write, so he had given himself to the ministry of prayer. He kept a prayer list of persons for whom he prayed each day; and his power of prayer was great. A certain tavern owner in the village made it a habit to swear and blaspheme whenever he saw a Christian. Father Nash heard this man discussed as a "hard case" and put his name on the prayer list. Very soon afterwards this man came to one of the meetings and made a heart-broken confession of his treatment of God, of Christians and of the revival. This confession was a powerful means to break up the resistance of many others. The tavern keeper entertained a Christian hope, and soon inaugerated nightly prayer meetings in his barroom.[56]

The revival at Evans Mills was successful and now unopposed. Our novice preacher set his sights on Antwerp. He arrived there for the first time in April and found that no religious services of any kind were being held in the town. There was a small Presbyterian congregation with just a few members, but they had ceased to hold meetings for worship because the elder who conducted the services lived about five miles outside the village and had to pass through a Universalist settlement to Antwerp. Finney was told that the Universalists had broken up the village meeting by making it impossible for the elder to pass through their settlement. In their obstruction they went so far as to remove the wheels of his carriage. Undaunted, Finney set about to speak with people in the streets of the village about a public meeting. He recalled that he heard "a vast amount of profanity" in every public place. "I felt," he said, "as if I had arrived upon the borders of hell." Nevertheless, a small group of people gathered in the parlor of a pious woman to hear Finney's plea. They agreed to secure the use of the village schoolhouse and announce that he would preach on Sabbath morning.

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[56] *Ibid.*, pp. 65-72.

Saturday was an uneasy time of prayer for Finney, and excitement for the people of the community. On Sunday morning he went to the woods for prayer at some distance from the village where, as he put it, "I could let out my voice as well as my heart." He arrived at the school-house to find it filled to capacity. He used as his text John 3:16 and labored upon the treatment which God received in return for his love. "The subject affected my own mind very much;" he recalled, "and I preached and poured out my soul and my tears together."[57] He pointed several of the men out, in the congregation, from whom he had heard "the most awful profanity." He told them that they seemed "to howl blasphemy about the streets like hell-hounds"; and it seemed to him that he had arrived "on the very verge of hell." The truth was out, but they did not seem to be offended. The meeting seems to have closed with a great deal of weeping for Finney concluded, "I think there were scarcely any dry eyes in the house."[58] A meeting was

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57. Ibid., p. 100.

58. Ibid.

announced for that very same afternoon, to be held in the more commodious meeting house which was now offered by the landlord for use. Finney preached to a crowded congregation, "and the Lord let me loose upon them in a wonderful manner," as he put it. The services of that day were "effectual to the conviction of the great mass of the population," and the people continued to throng to hear him.[59]

On the third Sabbath at Antwerp, an aged man asked Finney to preach the next afternoon in a schoolhouse about three miles distant. It was a neighborhood long bereft of a religious ministry; but at the appointed time Finney found the schoolhouse full so he could find standing space only at the open door. He began by reading a hymn which the people then attempted to sing. He observed that they seemed "never to have had any church music in that place." As they sang, "each one bawled in his own way." It became so distressing to Finney, who had a cultivated ear for music, that he finally had to put both hands over his ears to shut out the discord. "I stood it, however, until they were through"; he wrote, "and then I cast myself down on my knees, almost in a state of desperation, and began to pray."[60] As if this were not enough, he arose from his knees and announced his text--he had taken no thought with regard to the text upon which to preach until that moment. "Up, get you out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city." He had to tell them that he did not recollect where the text was, but he told them "very nearly" where they could find it. Then in the midst of this confusion he went on to explain the text: how Abraham and Lot separated, and how the Lord decided to destroy Sodom. He told them how exceedingly wicked Sodom had become, and as he was relating this narrative he observed that the people appeared to be angry. Many of the men were in their shirt sleeves, and as they glowered at one another Finney anticipated that surely they would fall upon him. He pressed on with even more energy, because he took it for granted that this was a truly ungodly people. Within a quarter of an hour of direct application of his theme, Finney reported that "all at once an awful solemnity seemed to settle down upon them; the congregation began to fall from their seats in every direction, and cried for mercy. If I had had a sword in each hand, I could not have cut them off their seats as fast as they fell."[61] He was obliged to stop preaching, for nearly the entire congregation was either on their knees or prostrate, and as they prayed aloud no one gave any more attention to the preacher. The novice preacher of enthusiastic religion was hard put to regain control of the meeting. He called out to them, "You are not in hell yet; and now let me direct you to Christ." As few paid any attention he went among the congregation to speak and pray to the "wounded souls" one by one. It was only later that he learned of the reason for the anger manifested earlier in that meeting. The place was called Sodom, and the one pious man there was the old man who invited him to preach--his name was Lot. Finney recorded in his Memoirs that this was a "striking coincidence."[62] Out of such beginnings a powerful revival continued for a time in that place.

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[59] Ibid., p. 101.

[60] Ibid., p. 102.

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[61] *Ibid.*, p. 103.

Through April, May, and June, Finney continued to preach in Antwerp to crowded and enthusiastic congregations. He subdued the Universalist community which had subverted for so long religious meetings at Antwerp in the midst of scenes which rivalled the response at Sodom. A small German community nearby was revived; the whole area was aflame.[63] It must have seemed an ecclesiastical anti-climax when, in June, Finney received a letter at Antwerp from Adams W. Platt assuring him that there would be little opposition to his ordination at the next meeting of Presbytery. "I think you may calculate upon its being done," he wrote, "without any opposition--if the matter is brought forward in a proper manner."[64] On July 1, 1824, in accordance with the usages of the Presbyterian Church, the novice Finney was solemnly set apart to the work of the Gospel ministry. The ordination services were conducted in the Methodist meeting house at Evans Mills with the Reverend Adams W. Platt presiding. Reverend J. Clinton preached the sermon, Reverend G. S. Boardman delivered the charge, and the Reverend S. F. Snowden offered the prayer of consecration. The Reverend E. Bliss and the Reverend W. B. Stowe led the devotions at the opening and the closing of the service.[65] Thus it was that Charles G. Finney, in the midst of a frontier revival, the preacher of enthusiastic religion, was ordained a minister of the Presbyterian Church.

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[62] Ibid., p. 105.

[63] Ibid., pp. 106, 75-79.

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[64] Adams W. Platt to Finney, June 22, 1824, Finney Papers, OCL.

[65] Cf. Beardsley, op. cit., p. 51.

PART ONE. FINNEY AS AN INNOVATOR: THE NEW MEASURES

I. THE THEOLOGY OF "MEANS"

A. The Madman of Oneida County

Dr. Lyman Beecher, as well as the Reverend Asahel Nettleton, had labored hard for revivals in the Pilgrim land; but theirs was a different type of approach than Finney's. Finney supporters, however, were not above comparing the notable Beecher with the "madman of Oneida County." A friend of Mrs. Lydia Finney[1] did just that in a letter written from Boston a short time before she and her husband left America for a foreign mission field. "By the way," she wrote, "this same Dr. Beecher is a most wonderful man. I wish you could have heard him lay down the Law to sinners yesterday. I tell the good folks of Boston how much he preaches like the madman of Oneida County. I tell them perhaps they do not think it a very great compliment, but they be assured it is the best one I could possibly pay him."[2]

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[1] Finney was married to Miss Lydia Andrews in October, 1824. A young lady of notable qualities from Whitestown, Oneida County, she had been deeply interested in praying for Finney's conversion in the days of his impenitence. Two or three days after the marriage he returned to Evans Mills and became so involved in the revivals of the vicinity that it was several months before he could send for her. Cf. G. Frederick Wright, Charles Grandison Finney (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1891), p. 37f.

Late in 1825 Finney began his assault on the upper Mohawk Valley. In October the synod to which Finney belonged met in Utica, and after a few days at the synod meeting he and his wife were urgently invited to visit the home of the Reverend George Gale, his theological teacher, who resided at Western. The Presbyterian church there had been without a pastor, and Mr. Gale was unable to preach because of poor health, so Finney was invited to lead the prayer meeting which, as he recalls in his Memoirs, developed into a "thorough breaking down and confession" of the assembly, and not a little confusion.[3] Prevailed upon to remain for the Sabbath services, Finney preached with an aggressive conviction that fell like hammer blows upon the flinty hearts, igniting a flame which soon consumed Western and spread to Rome. These spectacular revivals of 1825 to 1827 in Western, Rome, Utica, Auburn, and Troy catapulted Finney into national fame and made his theological views and methods a matter of violent controversy.[4]

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[2] Mrs. Laura F. Judd to Mrs. Lydia Finney, October 30, 1827, Finney Papers, OCL.

[3] Charles G. Finney, Memoirs of Rev. Charles G. Finney (New York: A. S. Barnes & Co., 1876), p. 147.

[4] Finney relates his recollections of these revivals in his Memoirs, pp. 144-225.

Newspapers in the area of the revivals carried eye-witness reports, which were then reprinted in prominent eastern papers; and they were read with a combination of attraction and dread, feelings excited as if the readers were by-standers watching a building consumed with flames of fire. New constructions of the church and ministry were evolving in the "burned-over district" of western New York.

When Charles Grandison Finney marched into the rolling hills of western New York and along the environs of the Erie Canal in the second quarter of the nineteenth century he encountered a people psychically prepared to embrace religious beliefs, however eccentric, with enthusiasm. Whitney R. Cross and Alice Felt Tyler have shown how many eccentricities found substantial, sometimes original, support in this area.[5] Finney, however, interpreted initial opposition to revivals as the result of earlier and spurious excitement. "I found that region of country," he wrote, "what, in the western phrase, would be called, 'a burnt district.'" He continued:

> There had been, a few years previously, a wild excitement passing through that region, which they called a revival of religion, but which turned out to be spurious. I can give no account of it except what I heard

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[5] Whitney R. Cross, The Burned-over District; The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850 (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1950); and, Alice Felt Tyler, Freedom's Ferment. Phases of American Social History to 1860 (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1944).

> from Christian people and others. It was reported as having been a very extravagant excitement; and resulted in a reaction so extensive and profound, as to leave the impression on many minds that religion was a mere delusion.[6]

Nevertheless, these people soon submitted themselves to Finney's fiery exhortations and were again ablaze. Cross suggests that the burning-over process "fertilized luxuriant new growths rather than merely destroying old ones."[7] As it had been before Finney, so it remained afterwards: a place where enthusiasm in religion flourished.

A revival of religion, as Finney put it, "presupposes a declension." If man is thus disinclined to obey God, then he must be excited to such a state that he will agonize in supplication until his self-will is broken down. This requires radical measures, and Finney was prepared to use them. At Western, according to one report, he told his audience, "Your prayers are so very cold they do not rise more than six feet high; you must strive hard and struggle--you must groan, you must agonize, why you must pray till your nose bleeds, or it will not avail. If you do not do better I must soon shake my garments against you and clear out and be gone. I would not have you think that I will stay here and go to hell along

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6. Finney, Memoirs, p. 78.

7. Cross, op. cit., p. 4.

with the rest of you."[8] Although this report is by a Universalist, whose statement was doubtless made to ridicule Finney, it reflects the color of his language utilized to excite the sinner. "God has found it necessary," wrote Finney in his Lectures on Revivals of Religion (1835), "to take advantage of the excitability there is in mankind, to produce powerful excitements among them, before he can lead them to obey. Men are so sluggish, there are so many things to lead their minds off from religion, and to oppose the influence of the gospel, that it is necessary to raise an excitement among them, till the tide rises so high as to sweep away the opposing obstacles. They must be so excited that they will break over these counteracting influences, before they will obey God."[9] To others, not acculturated in the Old School or Universalist points of view, Finney's measures and achievement were appreciatively received. From Rome, in April, 1826, an account reads: "A Mr. Finney came to help the pastor. . . . After he came, the Spirit of God was shed down with such power that nothing seemed able to resist it. . . . The Revival is remarkable for its solemnity and deep heart-searching."[10] A young lady from Connecticut, who was visiting Utica during the revival there, wrote in June of 1826: "Such a revival of religion I have never before seen, and all has evidently been in answer to the fervent, persevering prayer of faith. . . . In every village around us God is pouring out his Spirit. A powerful work of grace has just commenced at Clinton, under the ministry of Mr. Finney."[11] An account of Finney's work in Utica, by Thomas W. Seward, Esq., in an address upon the history of that city, gives another favorable view:

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[8] Gospel Advocate (Buffalo, New York), January 13, 1826, p. 3; quoted in William G. McLoughlin, Jr., Modern Revivalism; Charles Grandison Finney to Billy Graham (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1959), p. 27.

[9] Charles Grandison Finney, Lectures on Revivals of Religion, Edited by William G. McLoughlin, (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1960), pp. 9-10.

> The spring of the year 1826 was signalized, in the history of the First Presbyterian Church at Utica, by the advent of Rev. Charles G. Finney, then in the dawn of his career as a revivalist. . . . His exposition of that law was original and bold. Its novel character and its extraordinary fruits soon became the universal themes either of admiration or criticism. For months the revival eclipsed all other interests, and in no other season of religious inquiry was a whole community known to have been so entirely absorbed in the great pursuit. Mr. Finney's treatment of religious quietude was as merciless as his dealings with the wicked conscience, and in the religious world he inaugurated a brief reign of terror. His stern methods were oftentimes as necessary as they were wholesome; but it was a singular fact, that among those whose hearts most failed them for fear were found many who had adorned years of religious profession by lives unspotted from the world.
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> The scenes in the crowded church /First Utica/ on these occasions were solemn beyond description. No unworthy accessories to heighten the interest or deepen

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[10] Wright, op. cit., p. 58.

[11] Ibid., p. 59.

> the impression were ever employed. Beyond some unaffected yet striking peculiarities of voice and manner in the speaker, there was nothing to attract curiosity, or offend even the most fastidious or carping sense of propriety. It is an inadequate tribute of praise to say of his preaching that, whether it was distinguished most for intellectual subtlety, strong denunciation of sin, or fearful portrayal of the wrath to come, it had its reward in uncounted accessions to the Christian ranks and renewed vigor of religious life. As a pulpit orator his place among the foremost of his time was long ago assured.[12]

The excitement and conversion phenomena which resulted from Finney's revivals in western New York activated the church and ministry in a general renewal. Four years after Finney's first meeting in Western, New York, Mr. Brayton could report of the revival, "It is still progressing, though not as powerful as it has been."[13] People began to expect more of their ministers in the way of soul-searching preaching and ardent visitation in the homes. Charles G. Finney became the model by which other ministers were judged; often to their dismay. Mrs. Brayton discussed the problem of the Western church in the wake of the revival:

> We have no minister in Western and at present no prospect of any, some people say Mr. Finney has spoilt us, because we can not find some one like him, we will not have any, but you know my dear Mrs. Finney we want a man

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[12] Philemon H. Fowler, Historical Sketch of Presbyterianism within the Bounds of the Synod of Central New York (Utica, N.Y.: Curtiss & Childs, 1877), p. 262.

[13] M. Brayton to Finney, December 16, 1829, Finney Papers, OCL.

> of peculiar talents, a man that would do good here must not only visit here and at Mr. Harris's but enter every house and not stay for the formalities of social visits but warn and exhort with readiness and earnestness. I fully believe a minister who would labour faithfully, and shew an equal regard and love for all the souls he visited, would not have to preach to empty seats, but our house would be well filled; Mrs. Gale says we are always finding fault with our ministers, perhaps it is too true, but must we make up our minds to be satisfied with any one who stands in the sacred desk, whether his sermons are profitable or not, whether he has any zeal or not? whether he manifests any brotherly love to the church or any feeling for those who are in the broad road to death? do tell me if the few who are denominated revival men are the peculiar favorites of Zion . . . does success crown their labour which would not attend others if they improved their talents which may be more or less in differing individuals.[14]

Charles Finney was able to produce excitement in the churches, and he was able to achieve conversions; also, he was able to maintain the loyal support of many persons for whom the revivals were a source of inspiration to Christian commitment and service. Several lawyers became enthusiastic Finney men: among them were Judge Jonas Platt of Utica and his son Zephaniah, the Honorable Zebulon Rudd Shipherd of Troy and Granville, and Theodore Spencer of Auburn. Robert S. Fletcher tells us that Judge Platt was "one of the most prominent men of the region; he had been a Federalist member of Congress, a general in the militia and justice of the New

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[14] Sarah Brayton to Mrs. Finney, May 6, 1829, Finney Papers, OCL.

York Supreme Court."[15] Some of the ministers of Oneida Presbytery--S. C. Aikin, Noah Coe, Moses Gillett, N. S. S. Beman, Herman Norton, Luther Myrick, and George W. Gale--were ardent workers in the Finney revivals.[16] Also, there was the Reverend John Frost of Whitesboro, one of the evangelist's earliest supporters, and Asa Mahan, who was licensed by the Oneida Presbytery in 1827 and later became the first president of Oberlin College. At Auburn there was the Reverend Dirck C. Lansing, who was one of Finney's lieutenants in the revival there, and later at Utica and New York City. Also, there was the Reverend Josiah Hopkins, who succeeded Lansing at Auburn and had been the theological mentor of John Jay Shipherd, founder of Oberlin College.[17]

Even of greater interest were the unnumbered host of young converts and preachers who became known as Finney's "Holy Band." These devoted enthusiasts labored in revivals along with Finney and, upon occasion, were known to follow his "new measures" to extremes.[18] A notable member of the "Holy Band" was Theodore Weld, a brilliant young man converted under unusual circumstances in Utica, who became a dramatic pleader of abolitionism, and other benevolent causes.[19] His estimation of the preaching of Charles G. Finney indicates the esteem in which he was held by many:

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[15] Robert S. Fletcher, A History of Oberlin College (Oberlin: Oberlin College, 1943), Vol. I, p. 12.

[16] *Ibid*., p. 13.

[17] *Ibid*.

[18] Cross, *op*. *cit*., p. 162.

> By the way dear brother you are enjoying a vast privilege in the constant preaching of that blessed man--I say you are enjoying a privilege--take it for granted of course that you are a regular attendant upon him.
>
> Br. Platt I am persuaded neither you nor I have ever duly estimated the preaching of that modern Paul. True we have both given it a preference over the preaching of any other man, but . . . when I make an . . . estimate of Mr. F. as a preacher in comparison with any other--within my knowledge--he rises above them to an overshadowing height.[20]

B. The Measure of Success is the Success of Measures

1. A Decade of Theological "Betweenity"

The people of western New York were, as Finney analyzed the situation, in a theological state of "betweenity" in the decade of 1825-1835.[21] In the midst of changing times there was a vigorous opposition to the received dogma of orthodox

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[19] An account of Weld's conversion may be found in Finney, Memoirs, pp. 184ff; another account is recorded in Lyman Beecher, The Autobiography of Lyman Beecher, Edited by Barbara M. Cross (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1961), II, 232-235.

[20] T. D. Weld to Zephaniah Platt, November 16, 1829, Finney Papers, OCL.

[21] Charles G. Finney, Sermons on Various Subjects (New York, 1835), p. 80.

Calvinism, and endless debate dulled the certitude of awakened minds. Finney was determined to rescue the inhabitants of western New York from the debilitating effects of this "betweenity." The spirit of conserving a heritage, which belongs to religious orthodoxy, is always threatened when change is imminent; because the philosophy and religion of a people cannot long endure in the mind unrelated to the world in which the life is lived. It is an "inevitable corollary," G. Adolf Koch has written, "that where life changes religion cannot remain the same. Whatever ultimate, disembodied, and absolute religious truths there may be, man must be trusted to embody them in whatever way of life he may follow."[22]

What made Finney an epochal figure was the dramatic success of his "new measures" and the eloquence of his preaching, both of which were grounded in a "new divinity" calculated to pulsate in series with the mind and heart of the Yankee in the Reserve. Finney knew that mind and heart, for it was the pattern of his own: the religious doubts inlaid upon a deep yearning for salvation, the common sense approach which tended to discount the theological niceties of traditional Calvinism, the appreciation of techniques that achieved the desired results. He was, to a large degree, freed from the socialization processes which accompanied the seminary training of his day and the traditional nurture of the church; therefore, he was informed by no prescribed obligation to maintain the old theological structures of what he called "hyper-Calvinism." With a positive cathexis to the changing culture of this period, Finney embodied the spirit of the times as he set about to transform American Protestantism.

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[22] G. Adolf Koch, Republican Religion. The American Revolution and the Cult of Reason (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1933), p. 285.

The transformation of the American church and ministry, in which Finney was the popular leader, had its origins in the First Awakening with the revivalism of Jonathan Edwards; but it was the new revivalism of the Second Awakening which marked a conceptual change in theology. Edwards thought of the revival of 1735 at Northampton as "the surprising work of God," but Dwight, concerned with the spector of infidelity in New England and stimulated by the success of revivals on the frontier in the 1800's, deliberately attempted to start a revival. Lyman Beecher and Nathaniel W. Taylor diligently sought instruments with which revivals might be cultivated. Winthrop S. Hudson has written:

> Taylor was the theologian who worked out the appeal and provided the intellectual defense. Beecher was the organizer and the promoter, the strategist who devised the campaign and the commander who marshaled the forces, and he proceeded directly and effectively to go about the business of winning people to Christ.[23]

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[23] Winthrop S. Hudson, The Great Tradition in American Churches (New York: Harper & Row, 1953), p. 69.

Striding far beyond the bounds of the orthodoxy of his time, Finney took his stance ever so near the boundaries of an anthropocentric view which stood a far distance from the theocentric theology of the Reformation. The mystery of the *deus absconditus*, who did his proper work in human hearts during conversion, was now exposed as a "moral governor" whose work was neither surprising, nor mystical. "*Religion is the work of man*," wrote Finney. "It is something for man to do." And further, a revival of religion is not a miracle: "It is a purely philosophical result of the right use of the constituted means--as much so as any other effect produced by the application of means."[24] If Finney did not exceed the movement of New England theology to a large degree, he did innovate and elaborate the measures by which this "work of man" was accomplished.

The protracted revivals of Charles Finney in western New York during the 1820's blasted Beecher's hopes for an evangelical unity toward which he had been striving. The Unitarians revelled in every possible hint of vulgarity and excess of excitement reported in Finney's ministrations, gleefully advising the public that this was what revivalism really was.[25] Orthodox Calvinists, informed by the theological faculties of Princeton and Andover, were already nervous about Taylor at Yale and found Finney's theology to be only a candid and logical extension of the implications of the New Haven divinity. Beecher at first feared that Finney would bring religion to a semi-barbarism, but he was soon forced to invite him to Boston by the demands of his deacons and colleagues. Taylor was cordial, but somewhat aloof from the popular debate; the Princeton voices became strident and later called for Finney to leave the church. But the "new measures" worked, and thousands of converts rose up to call

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[24] Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion* (edition cited), pp. 9, 13.

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[25] In this way Finney's revivals were used to discredit Beecher and his revival men in New England thus undermining their campaign against the Unitarians.

"No one appreciated the threat of this situation more fully than Beecher himself. He was convinced that 'Satan, as usual, is plotting to dishonour a work which he cannot withstand.' Finney's 'new measures,' he said, 'introduce into revivals another spirit'--it is 'a spirit of fanaticism, of spiritual pride, censoriousness, and insubordination to the order of the Gospel, which, if not met by the timely and decided disapprobation of ministers and churches, threatens to become one of the greatest evils which is likely to befall the cause of Christ.' Hence, he insisted, something must be done to 'stop the mouths of Socinians and others who would be glad to blast revivals by the evils arising from the West.' It was necessary, he thought, to justify Finney and the western group 'against the opposition of formalists and the haters of revivals of religion.' But this in turn 'makes it necessary that Brother Finney should come upon ground on which we can sustain him, for we cannot justify his faults for the sake of his excellencies.'" Cf. Sidney Earl Mead, *Nathaniel William Taylor, 1786-1858, A Connecticut Liberal* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942), pp. 205-206.

Finney blessed. The pragmatic interest was to prevail. After all, revivalists must choose and restate their doctrines so that they can be more easily defended. Both Beecher and Taylor had sought to make their doctrines more preachable, hence the emphasis upon man's ability rather than God's sovereignty.[26] Finney rose above all criticism in the sure hope that the measure of success was the success of the measures used.

2. The Theory of Means

Thus it was that Finney's theology of means became empowered by what Richard Hofstadter has called "the pervasive and aggressive egalitarianism of American life."[27] In this era of the common man, which we loosely call Jacksonian democracy, the disestablishment of a patrician leadership in religion, business, politics, and education, became complete. "It seemed to be the goal of the common man in America," writes Hofstadter, "to build a society that would show how much could be done without literature and learning--or rather, a society whose literature and learning would be largely limited to such elementary things as the common man could grasp and use."[28]

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[26] Ibid., p. 62.

[27] Richard Hofstadter, Anti-Intellectualism in American Life (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963), p. 50.

[28] Ibid., p. 51.

The bond that held most churches together was not the traditional and inherited theology so much as it was newly conceived goals and motivations. The rational discussion of theological issues continued, but many considered this a distracting and divisive enterprise to be subordinated to the practical objectives of conversion and commitment to the benevolent enterprises sponsored by evangelical agencies.[29] The church and ministry must be awakened and instructed if religion was to exist in a flourishing condition. "There is not sufficient intelligence among the people and especially of religious intelligence to have them to take such views of things as are calculated to induce them to act for the cause of Christ," wrote Dennis M. Winston to Finney. "Ministers have been deficient as they are ready enough to acknowledge," he continued, "in teaching their people their duty so far as the cause of benevolence is concerned."[30] Another Finneyite wrote, "The responsibility of private Christians is not extensively felt. To creep to heaven and do no harm is about the amount of what the most of professors aim to attain." Learned theological treatises would not move such "creeping" Christians; for, as he further stated, "The idea of a determined fierce attack upon the battlements of Satan is not in their creed and liturgy."[31]

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[29] Ibid., pp. 83-84.

[30] Dennis M. Winston to Finney, March 31, 1828, Finney Papers, OCL.

Finney's theology was experimental, the product of his experience in revivals, especially during the decade 1825-1835. It was further validated by a rational application of the "laws of the mind" and the "various classes of truths." It was tempered in the fires of confrontation as he preached to multitudes who shared his common-sense orientation; and it was published in dozens of sermons and lectures.[32] His point of view, with regard to traditional systems of theology, is clearly stated in the Preface to his Lectures on Systematic Theology:

> I have not yet been able to stereotype my theological views, and have ceased to expect ever to do so. The idea is preposterous. None but an omniscient mind can continue to maintain a precise identity of views and opinions. Finite minds, unless they are asleep or stultified by prejudice, must advance in knowledge. The discovery of new truth will modify old views and opinions, and there is perhaps no end to this process with finite minds in any world. True christian consistency consists, not in stereotyping our opinions and views and in refusing to make any improvement in knowledge lest we should be guilty of change, but it consists in holding our minds open to receive the rays of

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[31] E. N. Kirk to Finney, April 14, 1829, Finney Papers, OCL.

[32] The chief published sources of Finney's theology, in chronological order, are: Lectures on Revivals of Religion (May, 1835), Sermons on Various Subjects (June or July, 1835), Sermons on Important Subjects (1836), Lectures on Revivals (1845), Lectures on Systematic Theology (1846-1847), and the works published posthumously, Sermons on Gospel Themes (1876), Sermons on the Way of Salvation (1891).

> truth from every quarter, and in changing our views and language and practice as often and as fast as we can obtain further information.[33]

Finney's modification of old views and opinions was grounded in his arguments concerning the nature of man's ability to respond immediately, in repentance and obedience, to the gospel. This question of man's ability had been a bone of contention in American theology since the Great Awakening, and Finney considered Edwards' treatment of the "freedom of the will" to be a "monstrosity and misnomer."[34] "The moral inability of Edwards is a real natural inability," wrote Finney, "and so it has been understood by sinners and professors of religion." He continued:

> When I entered the ministry, I found the persuasion of an absolute inability on the part of sinners to repent and believe the gospel almost universal. When I urged sinners and professors of religion to do their duty without delay, I frequently met with stern opposition from sinners, professors of religion, and ministers. They desired me to say to sinners that they could not repent and that they must wait God's time, that is, for God to help them. . . . The church was almost universally settled down in the belief of a physical moral depravity, and of course, in a belief in the necessity of a physical regeneration, and also of course in the belief that sinners must wait to be regenerated by divine power while

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[33] Charles G. Finney, Lectures on Systematic Theology, Embracing Ability, (natural, moral and gracious), Repentance, Impenitence, Faith and Unbelief, Justification, Sanctification, Election, Reprobation, Divine Purposes, Divine Sovereignty, and Perseverance (Oberlin: James M. Fitch, 1847), p. iii.

[34] Ibid., p. 30.

> they were passive. . . . The vigorous use of means and measures to promote a work of grace was regarded by many as impious. It was getting up an excitement of animal feeling, and wickedly interfering with the prerogative of God. The fact is, that both professors of religion and non-professors were settled down upon their lees, in carnal security. The abominable dogmas of physical moral depravity or a sinful constitution with a consequent natural (falsely called moral) inability, and the necessity of a physical and passive regeneration, had chilled the heart of the church, and lulled sinners into a fatal sleep. This is the natural tendency of such doctrines.[35]

For Finney it was clearly a matter of common justice; sinners are bound to repent because "they are moral agents, and have the powers which God requires them to exercise." The sinner's cannot consists of his unwillingness and not in his inability to repent and obey the gospel. "Obligation to perform duty," writes Finney, "never rests on the condition that we shall first have the influence of the Spirit, but on the powers of moral agency. We, as moral agents, have the power to obey God, and are perfectly bound to obey; and the reason that we do not is, that we are unwilling."[36]

Because the sinner is a moral agent who has the power to obey God, he is "perfectly bound to obey"; therefore, "the vigorous use of means and measures" was not for Finney an impious act but the appropriate agency for regeneration and conversion. It was the duty of sinners to make for themselves new hearts. It was the duty of ministers to "labour with sinners, as a lawyer does with a jury, and upon the same principles of mental philosophy; and the sinner should weigh his arguments, and make up his mind as upon oath and for his life, and give a verdict upon the spot, according to law and evidence."[37] "There is a sense," wrote Finney, "in which conversion is the work of God. There is also a sense in which the preacher does it. And it is also the appropriate work of the sinner himself."[38] The actual change, however, is "the sinner's own act." The agent who induces the change is the Spirit of God; a secondary agent is the preacher, or other individual, who presents the truth; and the truth is the instrument which the Spirit uses to induce the sinner to turn.[39]

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[35] Ibid., p. 49.

[36] Finney, Lectures on Revivals of Religion, pp. 107-108, Cf. also, pp. 379-380.

This change of heart is not a physical change in the constitution of the mind, for this would have no moral character. "The _change_," wrote Finney, "to have moral character, must be _voluntary_. To constitute a change of _heart_, it must not only be voluntary, but must be a change in the _governing preference_ of the mind. It must be a change in regard to the supreme object of pursuit."[40] Therefore, a change of heart is not something "miraculous" in which the sinner is entirely passive, for the spiritual heart is that "deep seated but voluntary preference of the mind, which lies back of all its other voluntary affections and emotions, and from which they take their character."[41] It was Finney's understanding that a change of heart is "just what we mean by a change of mind in regard to the supreme object of pursuit; a change in the choice of an end, not merely in the choice of means."[42] Very specifically, it is "a change in the choice of a Supreme Ruler." In an interesting metaphor, Finney once again applied his legal and governmental scheme:

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[37] Finney, "Sinners Bound to Change Their Own Hearts," _Sermons on Important Subjects_ (New York: John S. Taylor, 1836), p. 32.

[38] _Ibid._, p. 20.

[39] _Ibid._

> Thus the world is divided into two great political parties; the difference between them is, that one party choose Satan as the god of this world, yield obedience to his laws, and are devoted to his interest. Selfishness is the law of Satan's empire, and all impenitent sinners yield it a willing obedience. The other party choose Jehovah for their governor, and consecrate themselves, with all their interests, to his service and glory . . . .[43]

If conversion is "the sinner's own act," then it is the minister's responsibility to attack with boldness the "refuges of lies" in which the sinner hides himself and use such means

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40. Ibid., pp. 16-17.

41. Ibid., p. 8.

42. Ibid.

43. Ibid., p. 10.

as shall "subdue the rebel at once." This was not to be a long-term siege but an engagement calculated to bring the sinner "to yield upon the spot." The following passage shows how directly Finney believed the minister should work on the mind of the subject:

> The preacher should therefore acquaint himself with his refuges of lies, and as far as possible take into consideration his whole history, including his present views and state of mind; should wisely select a subject; so skilfully arrange, so simply and yet so powerfully present it as to engage the sinner's whole attention, and then lay himself out to bring him to yield upon the spot. He who deals with souls should study well the laws of mind, and carefully and prayerfully adapt his matter and his manner to the state and circumstances, views and feelings, in which he may find the sinner at the time. He should present that particular subject, in that connexion and in that manner, that shall have the greatest *natural tendency* to subdue the rebel at once.[44]

This theory of powerful immediacy in the conversion of sinners raised heated arguments among ministers and strong emotional responses among the laity, especially those subjects to whom the means were applied.

In his controversial sermon, "Christian Affinity" (1827) --on the text, "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3)--Finney forced the logic of his theory to the point he argued that the use of means and preaching in a promotion of revivals would necessarily cause opposition, and the stronger the opposition the more godly and right the measures must be judged to be. It is well to note the argument in his own words:

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[44] *Ibid*., p. 40.

> Hence we see, that the more pure and holy the _means_ are that are used to promote a revival of religion, the more they are stripped of human infirmity and sympathy, and the more like God they are, so much the more, of _necessity_, will they excite the opposition of _all wrong hearts_. For, while a man's heart is _wrong_ upon any subject, it is self-evident that he cannot _heartily approve_ of what is right upon that subject, for this would involve a contradiction. It would be the same as to say that he could feel both _right_ and _wrong_ upon the same subject at the _same time_.
>
> Hence it appears, that _other things being equal_, those means, and that preaching, both as to _matter_ and _manner_, which are most _directly over against wrong hearts_, are nearest right.[45]

If Finney did not at first see the danger lurking in this argument--that all opposition must be judged as "enmity of the heart" against God--there were many who forcefully called his attention to it; and to this last sentence quoted he added a footnote which read in part, "Let it not be thought that we advocate or recommend preaching or using other means, with design to give offence . . . ."[46]

Finney did recognize that his theory of means and measures might be construed as advocating mere excitement, so he carefully stated that "you cannot change your heart by working your imagination and feelings into a state of excitement."[47] "Sinners are apt to suppose," wrote Finney, "that great fears and terrors, great horrors of conscience, and the utmost stretch of excitement that the mind is capable of bearing, must necessarily precede a change of heart." Indeed, such feelings often precede a change of heart, but such a highly excited state of feeling is the result of ignorance and obstinacy. "It often happens," he goes on to say, "that sinners will not yield, and change their hearts, until the Spirit of God has driven them to extremity; until the thunders of Sinai have been rolled in their ears, and the lurid fires of hell have been made to flash in their faces. All this is no part of the work of making a new heart; but is the result of resistance to the performance of this duty."[48] "If you are willing to do your duty when you are shown what it is," Finney concludes, "fears, and terrors, and great excitement of mind are wholly unnecessary: God has no delight in them for their own sake, and never causes them only when driven to the necessity by pertinacious obstinacy."[49]

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[45] Finney, "Christian Affinity," _Sermons on Important Subjects_, pp. 188-189.

[46] _Ibid._, p. 199.

[47] Finney, "How to Change Your Heart," _Sermons on Important Subjects_, p. 44.

The direction of Finney's thought in these earlier years was toward a consistent statement of the Evangelical faith

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48. Ibid., p. 44.

49. Ibid., p. 45.

which would emphasize individual responsibility in the apprehension of Biblical truths, and an evangelical life marked by disinterested benevolence. His thought took shape in his two volumes, Lectures on Systematic Theology, published in 1846 and 1847: but most of the basic ideas were enunciated in his earlier preaching and writing. His theory of means and measures was grounded in his conception of the Evangelical faith. There must be an "intellectual perception" of the things, facts and truths believed--"No one can believe that which he does not understand."[50] These truths of the gospel must be appropriated by the individual; for Christ is not only the Savior of the world, but of the individual. "He is embraced by the world," wrote Finney, "no farther than he is embraced by individuals."[51] In his view it follows that Evangelical faith implies an evangelical life. "This would not be true," he argues, "if faith were merely an intellectual state or exercise. But since . . . faith is of the heart, since it consists in the committal of the will to Christ, it follows by a law of necessity that the life will correspond with faith."[52] Evangelical faith implies "repentance towards God" and "particularly respects Jesus Christ and his salvation"; and it results in a disinterested benevolence, "a state of good will to being."[53]

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[50] Finney, Lectures on Systematic Theology, op. cit., f.n. 33, p. 80.

[51] Ibid., p. 81.

[52] Ibid., p. 82.

If this part of Finney's theology seemed to be well within the circle of the Evangelical consensus of the period, his treatment of gospel justification moved to an outer orbit. He believed that since justification is the pronouncing of one just, it must be "in some sense a governmental act." He argued that justification could not be a judicial or forensic proceeding, but must be a setting aside of an incurred penalty and therefore either an executive or a legislative act.[54] Since justification is to be applied to sinners who have violated the law, "it is certainly nonsense to affirm that a sinner can be pronounced just in the eye of law; that he can be justified by deeds of law or by the law at all."[55] There are valid conditions for justification, however, and they are, primarily, "the vicarious sufferings or atonement of Christ" and "sanctification." Christ could not obey as our substitute, yet since he perfectly obeyed he owed no suffering to the Divine government on his own account. "He could not perform works of supererogation," wrote Finney, "but he could endure sufferings of supererogation in the sense that he did not owe them for himself."[56] Further, Finney argued that sanctification was a condition of justification and not justification a condition of sanctification. Sanctification is "the will's entire subjection or consecration to God," and faith is a "present conformity of heart to the law of God."[57] Therefore it is erroneous to consider justification as preceding sanctification. This view of sanctification became one of the bones of contention as his innovations in thought and measures came under scrutiny.

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[53] Ibid., pp. 82, 83.

[54] Ibid., p. 96.

[55] Ibid., p. 97.

Finney's theory of means and measures, at the heart of his theology, was grounded in the Scottish common sense philosophy which dominated the period. A little pamphlet entitled "A Vindication of the Rev. C. G. Finney" asserts that he fully maintained "the common sense philosophy as explained in the writings of Stewart, Reid and Hamilton."[58] In adopting this philosophy he was directly in step with the leading theologians of the American Calvinistic tradition in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. This period experienced an acute need for an apologetic philosophy over against the

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[56] Ibid., p. 100.

[57] Ibid., p. 106.

[58] "A Vindication of the Rev. C. G. Finney," p. 31 (no author, n.d.), Finney Papers, OCL.

Enlightenment in the midst of ecclesiastical strife. Sydney E. Ahlstrom has shown how this common sense tradition was introduced into American Presbyterianism by John Witherspoon, into the Moderate Calvinist tradition at Harvard by David Tappan, how it liberated Channing and nourished the Unitarianism of James Walker, and informed the influential lectures of Timothy Dwight. Through the latter's disciple, Nathaniel Taylor, it came to occupy a central place in the New Haven theology.[59] At Andover this philosophy informed the response to liberalism by the orthodox Hopkinsian, Leonard Woods, and his successor, Edwards Amasa Park. And, at Princeton, the Witherspoon tradition was planted in the new seminary by Archibald Alexander and developed in the polemical theology of Charles Hodge.[60] We may only assume, in the midst of this diversity of adherents, that there was a genuine philosophical consensus.[61]

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[59] Sydney E. Ahlstrom, "Scottish Philosophy and American Theology," Church History, Vol. XXIV, No. 3 (September, 1955), 267.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Ahlstrom has summarized the "Scottish Philosophy" under four main points, which take a central place in the thought of any proponent of this common sense view:

> I. Philosophy depends on scientific observation, with the primary object of such observation being self-consciousness and not the external behavior of other men. (The *a priori* extension of Newtonian physics to the mental realm was held to be illicit just as "external" observation was felt to imply deterministic conclusions right from the outset.)

/II.

This assumption is further supported by the study of the origins of American critical thought in this period. William Charvat has written:

> It is a commonplace that the America of the nineteenth century was culturally dependent upon England. It is more accurate to say that it was culturally allied with Scotland. In America the most popular foreign

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(Cont.)

II. The observation of consciousness establishes principles which are anterior to and independent of experience. Some principles, like that of substance or cause-and-effect, are *necessary*, others, like the existence of things perceived, are *contingent*, but all are in the very constitution of the mind and not the product of experience. (It is at this point where Reid most clearly foreshadows the Kantian revolution in philosophy.)

III. Nothing can be an efficient cause in the proper sense but an intelligent being; matter cannot be the cause of anything but is only an instrument in the hands of a real cause. (This notion of agency or *power* is revealed by self-consciousness.)

IV. The first principles of morals are self-evident intuitions; moral judgments, therefore, are not deduced from non-moral judgments, for they are not deductions at all. /*Ibid*., p. 261.

Nathaniel Taylor's interpretation of the common sense philosophy may be seen in statements from his *Essays, Lectures, etc. upon Select Topics in Revealed Theology* (New York, 1859). "He refers to it as 'that elementary philosophy which the people possess--those ideas or conceptions of the nature of things which are common to the minds of men' (p. 224); or, again, as 'the competent, unperverted reason of the human mind' (p. 221), what 'the common decision of the unbiased mind' (p. 221), what might perhaps be called 'horse sense.' Its importance is not to be minimized, for, he says, it is 'common sense . . . . which God has constituted the ultimate umpire on every vital question of truth . . . and its decisions 'are to be relied upon as infallible judgments.'" (pp. 221-22). Sidney E. Mead, *op*. *cit*., p. 63, f.n. 32.

> periodicals were the Edinburgh and Quarterly reviews and Campbell's New Monthly Magazine. All three were run by Scots who had been brought up in the same philosophical and critical tradition. The philosophical background was the Scotch "common sense" school; the critical and aesthetic tradition was that of Kames, Blair and Alison, the "psychological" aestheticians. Now the interesting thing is that this philosophy and this aesthetics were just as popular in America as they were in Scotland.[62]

As we review the matter before us, the theory of means, we see that it was empowered by Jacksonian egalitarianism and was radically experimental; it insisted upon man's natural and moral ability to respond to the demands of the gospel to the degree that it was man's responsibility to change his own heart; necessary means were to be used to subdue the rebel heart, but mere excitement was not to be considered the proper mode; all was directed toward Evangelical faith with justification dependent not only upon the atonement of Christ, but of personal sanctification; and the whole system was grounded in common sense philosophy. Finney's theory of means was well within the circle of the theological and philosophical consensus of New England theology, apart from his doctrine of sanctification. It was sanctification and the radical implementation of his theory in the "new measures" which fed the fires of ecclesiastical controversy.

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[62] William Charvat, The Origins of American Critical Thought 1810-1835 (New York: A. S. Barnes and Co., 1936/1961), p. 29.

3. The Use of Means

As a consequence of the theological "betweenity" experienced in the Calvinistic churches in the 1820's, there was an era of experimentation in the use of means to convert sinners. Finney's success in the use of "new measures" was acclaimed by many as the keystone of the era. On December 5, 1826, the Oneida Evangelical Association invited him to accept an appointment as an evangelist of that association. He was to receive a salary of 600 dollars raised by subscription, and monies received by the evangelist were to be returned to the association. The letter of invitation indicated full confidence in Finney's labors: "I have no doubt myself, that the association may, under your influence and agency, assume a high station among the benevolent institutions which seem peculiarly to distinguish the present age; and that we may be enabled to send forth several evangelists, and to employ them constantly."[63] On January 1, 1827, he again was commissioned as an itinerant evangelist: "The Oneida Evangelical Society do hereby commission you, according to the instructions here unto annexed, and the resolutions of the Executive committee, of which you are informed, to be an evangelist of this society, to labour in such places as your best judgment shall direct for the establishment and benefit of the Redeemer's Kingdom for one year."[64]

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[63] A. B. Johnson to Finney, December 5, 1826, Finney Papers, OCL.

The theological effect upon the churches of this emphasis upon "new measures" was a rearrangement of Protestant theology which subordinated everything to immediate and practical efficiency in the conversion of sinners. Traditional methods informed by older modes of thought were set aside in favor of means which achieved larger results.[65] Finney understood his new measures as part of the ongoing history of the Church and defended them in his remarks at the close of his lecture on "Measures to Promote Revivals":

> If we examine the history of the church we shall find that there never has been an extensive reformation, except by new measures. Whenever the churches get settled down into a _form_ of doing things, they soon get to rely upon the outward doing of it, and so retain the form of religion while they lose the substance. . . . Perhaps it is not too much to say, that it is impossible for God himself to bring about reformations but by new measures. At least, it is a fact that God has _always_ _chosen_ this way, as the wisest and best that he could devise or adopt. . . . When he has found that a certain mode has lost its influence by having become a form, he brings up some new measure, which will BREAK IN upon their lazy habits, and WAKE UP a slumbering church. And great good has resulted.[66]

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[64] Asahel Seward to Finney, January 1, 1827, _Finney Papers_, OCL.

[65] Cf. R. E. Thompson, _A History of Presbyterian Churches in the United States_ (New York: The Christian Literature Co., 1895), p. 79.

[66] Finney, _Lectures on Revivals_, pp. 269-270.

In a very real sense, Finney was giving expression to his Puritan heritage. The leaven of the English Puritans was in the American tradition, the leaven of those who had been cut off from state support and thus had to resort to the extra-legal expedient of becoming "lecturers." Dependent upon their ability to secure voluntary contributions, they had to find means to make themselves heard and felt in the winning of souls to Christ. They were so successful in their enterprise, with no other resources than their power of persuasion, that within two generations they were able to transform the moral and spiritual climate of England. The measure of their success is evidenced by the tributes of their opponents: Thomas Fuller observed, "What won them most repute was their ministers' painful preaching in popular places"; and Selden asserted, "The lecturers are friars and they stole the people's hearts away from the clergy and also took away their money."[67] A similar outburst of creative energy was experienced in the awakenings which occurred in the period of the disestablishment of the church in Connecticut, and on the frontier where the minister and evangelist were quite dependent upon their personal powers of persuasion. Finney was very much aware of the dangers which gather when the church and ministry "get settled down into a form of doing things" and he gave his magnificent gifts of persuasion to the establishment of new measures in the revival of the church. It is ironic that his measures should become stereotyped and used as the received form of revivalism in the United States for a hundred years.

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[67] Quoted in W. S. Hudson, The Great Tradition in American Churches (New York: Harper and Row, 1953), p. 45.

The Narrative of the Revival of Religion in the County of Oneida; particularly in the bounds of the Presbytery of Oneida, in the year 1826 was published by the Presbytery of Oneida to give an account of the character of the revival which accompanied the preaching of Finney there, and to describe the means used.[68] The Narrative described thirteen measures which seemed to be the practical ground of those revivals. (1) Seasons of fasting and prayer were held. (2) The confession of sin in the churches was encouraged. (3) Church discipline was exercized. (4) There was visiting from house to house. (5) The preaching of the gospel, its doctrines and precepts, its promises and threatenings, was done with great plainness and earnestness. (6) A union of feeling and effort was attained in the churches. (7) Meetings of inquiry were held for questing sinners. (8) Disputes on minor points of doctrine were avoided. (9) Awakened sinners were urged to immediate repentance and reconciliation to God. (10) Visitation upon inquirers was undertaken by ministers, professors, and others. (11) The preaching and labors of evangelists were acknowledged. (12) United, agonizing, and persevering prayer was established. (13) And, Sabbath schools and Bible classes were given instructions in the way of salvation.

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[68] Extracts and discussion of this 67 page pamphlet may be found in Frank Grenville Beardsley, A Mighty Winner of Souls, Charles G. Finney; A Study in Evangelism (New York: American Trust Society, 1937), Chapter V, pp. 60-76.

As the revivals gathered momentum in Oneida County they received an increasing amount of publicity. The measures, listed above, described in the Narrative were widely accepted, but Finney was charged with rebuking in public not only open transgressors but professors of religion and ministers of the Gospel. Further, there was a crescendo of complaint that Finney was introducing innovations into these measures whereby "fanaticism was promoted": persons were prayed for in anxious meetings by name, women were encouraged to pray and exhort in promiscuous assemblies, and sinners were prevailed upon to come to the "anxious seat." The controversy became so bitter that Finney prepared an apologia in his lecture on "Measures to Promote Revivals." He indicated that three things, in particular, were opposed as "new measures," or "innovations": anxious meetings, protracted meetings, and the anxious seat.

With regard to anxious meetings, Finney claimed that he first heard of them "in New England, where they were appointed

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69. Finney, Lectures on Revivals, p. 262.

for the purpose of holding personal conversation with anxious sinners, and to adapt instruction to the cases of individuals, so as to lead them immediately to Christ."[69] These meetings might be conducted by having personal conversation with individuals to determine their state of mind, and then address the whole assembly, "to take up their errors and remove their difficulties."[70] Or, one might go around to each individual and in this personal conversation persuade him to give his heart to God. Finney claimed that either way of conducting anxious meetings had proved successful in practice, and that they were objected against "because they were new."

Finney argued that protracted meetings were not new, but had been practiced from the earliest days. The Jewish festivals were protracted meetings which differed in the manner in which they were conducted, not in the design: "to devote a series of days to religious services, in order to make a more powerful impression of Divine things on the minds of the people."[71] This design was inherent in the communion seasons of Scotland, for instance, as well as in the practices of all other denominations. He argued against those who did not regard the present circumstances of the people in appointing a protracted meeting, who claimed "that our business should always be made to yield to God's business." "But the worldly business in which we are engaged is not our business," said Finney. "It is as much God's business, and as much our duty, as our prayers and protracted meetings are."[72] Yet, there are times when "circumstances plainly call for it," and then, "it is our duty to lay aside every other business, and make direct and continuous efforts for the salvation of souls."[73] He argued that a protracted meeting should be conducted by the same minister throughout so as to unify the meeting, and that there should not be so many meetings as to interfere with the "duties of private prayer and of the family." He warned against "unnecessarily keeping late hours," and against the tendency to place dependence on a protracted meeting, "as if that of itself would produce a revival." He insisted that the churches should avoid "adopting the idea that a revival cannot be enjoyed without a protracted meeting."[74] Of particular concern to Finney was his caveat against all sectarianism. "If a sectarian spirit breaks out," he warned, "either in the preaching, or praying, or in conversation, it will counteract all the

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[70] Ibid.

[71] Ibid.

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72. Ibid., p. 263.

73. Ibid., p. 264.

74. Ibid., pp. 265-266.

good of the meeting."[75] Finney maintained this non-sectarian point of view to the end, in spite of the fact that he remained a controversial figure and was frequently misunderstood in the light of his many imitators. In 1873, in a letter to the editor of the Examiner and Chronicle, he wrote:

> Dear Brother, I have seen three articles in your paper criticising my notices of the revival in Governeur in 1825. I am truly sorry, that I offended my Baptist brethren by what I wrote, for I have labored much with them in revivals of religion . . . without any sectarian friction springing up to hinder the blessed work. . . . I am no sectarian; as the churches wherever I have labored, can testify. . . .[76]

It is the "anxious seat" which evoked the most controversy among the "new measures." Finney probably adopted the use of the anxious seat from the Methodists who had used a "mourner's bench" in their camp meetings early in the century. The anxious seat was a particular seat "where the anxious may come and be addressed particularly, and be made subjects of prayer, and sometimes be conversed with individually."[77] It was consistent with Finney's view that the individual should be persuaded to respond immediately when the feelings of repentance and desire for conversion were present; the anxious seat was peculiarly fitted for this purpose, but there were serious dangers associated with the practice. Andrew Reed and James Matheson in the narrative concerning their visit to the American churches as a deputation from the Congregational Union of England and Wales, recorded their reactions to the "new measures."[78] A well-balanced critique of the anxious bench was given, having "carefully sought information relative to it from its friends and its foes."

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[75] Ibid., p. 266.

[76] Finney to the Editor of the Examiner and Chronicle, March 28, 1873, Finney Papers, OCL.

[77] Finney, Lectures on Revivals, p. 267.

> I can readily believe that the employment of it may have been attended with decided evidence of usefulness in many cases. And I can as readily understand that a pious minister, truly awake to the importance of his work, and weary of the delay and indecision of many who wait on his ministry, may have, from the best intentions, ventured on such a measure, rather than to stand in perpetual doubt of those he pants to save. . . . Yet, after the best consideration of the subject, and the fullest admission in its behalf, it does appear to me, and is, I believe, appearing to many who have tried it, to be, as a measure of action, unwise and unsafe.[79]

The writer entertains the judgment that "we have no right to establish such measures." It is considered "a bad auxiliary to the success of the ministry"; because, it has the tendency to divert their attention to others, or "to an overt action of no importance any way to their welfare." He further asserts, "The question has then been amongst the people, Will any go? Will they go? Shall I go? Questions which many are glad to entertain, as a diversion to the conscience, from more serious and inward inquiry." Perhaps the most telling criticism is the writer's criticism of the "new measures" as attracting uneducated and rash men.

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[78] Andrew Reed and James Matheson, A Narrative of the Visit to the American Churches by the Deputation from the Congregational Union of England and Wales (New York: Thomas George, Jr., 1835). On the "protracted meeting," see Letter XXX, p. 685; on the "anxious seat," see Letter II, pp. 590-591, Letter XXX, pp. 685-686; and on the coalescense of New Divinity and New Measures, see Letter XXXII, p. 692. For further discussion of the "new measures" see Wright, Charles Grandison Finney, pp. 69, 76ff; Barnes, The Anti-slavery Impulse, p. 8. See also, Letters of Beecher and Nettleton, p. 12; and, Beecher, Autobiography, II, 101. For a later description placing responsibility upon the New Haven theologians for Finney's measures, see Baird, A History of the New School, pp. 225-34.

[79] Ibid., p. 685.

> Rash measures attract rash men. Those who would have felt it difficult enough to manage an argument, or discriminate between a right or wrong affection, are struck by what is so tangible and so visible, and so capable of impressing the grosser and animal sensations. Without the power, and perhaps the piety of their teachers, they quickly usurp their places. As they have attained their stations by deviating from the usual way, they reckon that it is only to be retained by the same course; and their onward and devious path is tracked by the most unsanctified violence and reckless extravagance.[80]

It is the case that many raw, young men set themselves up as revival ministers who itinerated over the church, "unsettling every thing, and settling nothing." These brash imitators of Finney only heightened the feelings against the new measures as they "denounced pastors, with whom they could not compare, men of tried and approved piety as hypocrites, formalists, 'dumb dogs,' and as 'leading their people to hell.'"[81]

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[80] Ibid., p. 686.

[81] Ibid.

Finney was also accused of initiating the measure of encouraging women to pray and speak in "promiscuous assemblies." Angelina Grimké reported in a letter that, "the very week that I was converted to Christ in the city of Utica during a powerful revival of religion under brother Finney--and the first time I ever spoke in a religious meeting--I urged females both to pray and speak if they felt deeply enough to do it, and not to be restrained from it by the fact that they were females."[82] This measure was clearly associated with Finney's revivals, and it was at Utica that he first heard of the opposition of Nettleton. In his Memoirs, Finney indicated that he could not recollect that Nettleton complained of women praying in public, but he did assert that there had been no opposition to this practice in Utica or in Rome. Further, he remarked, "I had no agency in introducing the practice among the people, and do not know whether it had existed there before or not. Indeed it was not a subject of much conversation or thought, so far as I know, in the neighborhood where it occurred."[83]

The results of the "new measures" in revivals were of different kinds. Revivals in Oneida County were astounding in their success, and a great deal of notoriety came to Finney as their chief agent. At the same time, the revival party experienced severe persecution at the hands of non-Christians and those who thought the measures to be radical innovations. A loyal Finneyite sounded a melancholy note when he wrote to Finney: "O Brother you never saw such times in this ungodly village for persecutions while you were here--nor any other man since this place was settled. I tell you of a truth God is here and Saturn /Satan?/ has fetched out his force against the Hosts of Israel's God."[84] Words of encouragement came to Finney from other loyal followers mixed with admonitions not to modify his measures in the face of his notoriety. Vigorous language indicated the strong feelings which were involved; for example,

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[82] Angelina Grimké /first page of manuscript missing/, August 26, 1837, Letters of Theodore Dwight Weld, Angelina Grimké Weld, and Sarah Grimké, 1822-1844, edited by Gilbert H. Barnes and Dwight L. Dumond, 2 vols. (New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1934), p. 432.

[83] Finney, Memoirs, p. 178.

> I will give one word of caution, for I know you receive it given it comes from love to you and Zion--you stand as a mark for every one to shoot at--and being in so conspicuous a place as Troy--multitudes will flock to hear you, and among them many men eminent for their learning, taste and piety, to form their judgment of this babler and setter forth of strange things. Now one divice /sic/ of Satan with you will be to convince you, if he can, that your reputation is at stake and excite in you anxiety on this account and lead you to preach yourself.[85]

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[84] E. Willard to Finney, August 28, 1826, Finney Papers, OCL.

[85] H. H. Kellogg to Finney, April 2, 1827, Finney Papers, OCL.

As the controversy over the "new measures" widened, the matter of means used in revivals became an issue for debate during more than a decade. In 1831 Ashbel Green addressed the students of the Princeton Theological Seminary encouraging them to consider revivals of religion, "for he who is a real enemy to this thing, must be hostile to the most glorious work of God in our guilty world, and utterly unfit for that ministerial vocation . . . to which every student of theology professes to aspire."[86] "But, my dear young brethren," he continued,

> it is of inconceivable importance that, in regard to revivals of religion, you do not entertain notions, and adopt practices, which are calculated to mar the blessed work which you seek to promote. . . . Fix in your minds, I beseech you, the great principle . . . that no human soul is ever converted, but by the special and almighty energy of the Holy Spirit; and that, in the part which men have to act in this great concern, they are careful to do that, and only that which God has assigned them as a matter of duty; that they are not to attempt to take the work out of God's hands, nor to use any means which he has not clearly authorized in his holy word.[87]

In spite of the agitation over his use of means, Finney continued the new measures and developed his apology for them. In his Lectures on Revivals of Religion (1835), he argued that many good men continue to believe that the best way to promote religion is "to go along uniformly, and gather in the ungodly gradually, and without excitement." But the Church is not sufficiently enlightened to proceed without "special excitement." "As the millennium advances," he wrote, "it is probable that these periodical excitements will be unknown. Then the Church will be enlightened, and the counteracting causes removed, and the entire Church will be in a state of habitual and steady obedience to God."[88] He anticipated a state of things for which Horace Bushnell later argued, as he continued: "Children will be trained up in the way they should go, and there will be no such torrents of worldliness, and fashion, and covetousness, to bear away the piety of the Church, as soon as the excitement of a revival is withdrawn."[89] Finney concluded, "If religion is ever to have a pervading influence in the world, this spasmodic religion must be done away with."[90] But that day was not yet.

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[86] Ashbel Green, "An Address to the Students of the Theological Seminary, at Princeton," Biblical Repertory and Theological Review, III (May 16, 1831), 359.

[87] Ibid., pp. 359-360.

C. The Growing Strife Over New Measures

1. The Storm Clouds Form

"Spasmodic religion" continued, and during the years 1826 and 1827 the strife over new measures became acute. The excessive emotional displays accompanying the revivals in Oneida County were thought to be mere "animal feelings" by many. The storm clouds were already forming in 1825 when C. C. Sears wrote to Finney: ". . . I shall have the unhappiness of differing from you, and shall also take the liberty of expressing a very serious doubt of the [genuineness] of that revival which is conducted upon the principle that no degree of animal feeling is too great, and that every excitement however raised, is to be cultivated and cherished."[91] When an evangelist of the reputation of Asahel Nettleton entered the controversy, it was thunder and lightning all over. In February of 1827, Nettleton wrote from Albany to the Reverend John Frost of Whitesboro expressing thankfulness for the revivals "at the West," but calling into question the measures used. "It is not of flying reports either good or bad," he wrote, "but it is of what they have seen and known and felt in their own churches and families, of the evils arising from a desparate attempt to revolutionize them and bring them to adopt *measures* which they have found to be so ruinous in their consequences."[92]

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[88] Finney, Lectures on Revivals, pp. 10-11.

[89] Ibid., p. 11.

[90] Ibid.

Nettleton claimed that the revival in Troy was going along well until an effort was made "*by some persons from the*

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[91] C. C. Sears to Finney, May 13, 1825, *Finney Papers*, OCL.

[92] Asahel Nettleton to Rev. John Frost, February 15, 1827, *Finney Papers*, OCL.

West to introduce their own peculiarities." He first expressed his distaste for the practice of females praying "in promiscuous assemblies," as adopted by Beman, Nash, and Finney. He claimed that this measure alone had caused a war to commence in Troy, "which has made more noise and been more calamitous to the cause, than all the opposition occasioned by the hopeful conversion of 800 in Troy in 1806 and of at least two thousand of our own denomination in this region seven years ago, and I may add by all the revivals of New England in our day."[93] He was particularly critical of reported censoriousness exhibited by the "host of imitators" who followed after Finney and others. Nettleton wrote:

> A host of imitators have risen and run out from these places in all directions, thinking to teach ministers and churches how to have revivals, and the great secret is, to get females to pray in school houses and circles where men, and ministers especially are present to see and hear them pray for them and others by name, and for all which they plan . . . . In this manner the spirit of a revival has been destroyed in many places, and prevented in others. And what is worse than all the rest, those ministers and Christians who do not fall in to defend these men and their measures, are denounced as cold and stupid and dead and enemies to revivals.[94]

Nettleton was careful, at this time, not to impugn the character or the motives of Finney, but he was clearly expressing the opinion that, "the peculiar measures adopted by [Finney] and some of our Western Brethren . . . were exceedingly calamatous in their consequences."[95]

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[93] Ibid.

[94] Ibid.

Nettleton closed his letter with the judgment that the New England body of churchmen, the Presbyterian Church, and the friends of revival in general would not defend the new measures and their consequences. "If these evils can be corrected silently and without further noise, it is certainly desirable," he wrote, "otherwise the views of those ministers who disapprove the measures in question must be published."[96] Nettleton was drawing the battle-line between East and West, the old and the new, between those who could not support the innovations in measures and those who defended them. For the Finneyites, however, the line was drawn simply between revivalism and antirevivalism. In 1828 this line had become visible in the workings of presbyteries and synods. "Before this reaches you," Nash wrote to Finney, "I think you will have heard of the doings of Synod. They have set off Otsego, Oneida, Oswego, Watertown, and Ogdensburgh Presbyteries, as a new Synod, if the Assembly agree to it. . . . The dividing line of revivalism, and anti revivalism, ran through the body on every important question--and the doings of Synod, this year, are, substantially, the doings of the Albany Presbytery."[97]

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95. Ibid.

96. Ibid.

97. Daniel Nash to Finney, October 17, 1828, Finney Papers, OCL.

2. The New Lebanon Convention

In March of 1827, Daniel Nash was writing to Finney about the favorable prospects for revival in New Lebanon. The opposition there seemed to come from a group of Masons; he believed that Finney might have some influence over them. He also mentioned that the opposers had a printed extract of Lyman Beecher's letter on the "new Measures."[98] By April Finney had left Troy and was laboring in New Lebanon, where a significant confrontation of the drawn battle-lines was to occur in July. Letters of Beecher and Nettleton were being circulated, with the result that men were choosing sides and feelings were tense on both sides. Herman Norton spoke about these letters and the growing crisis as he wrote to Finney at New Lebanon: "What does all this mean you may be ready to ask. I believe it means that God is about to reveal many things to the church and world that for months past have been in the darkness. It is exceedingly painful to view the state of feelings which now exists among many good men. We are also in great danger Bro. Finney of cultivating a wrong state of feeling towards those who differ from us."[99]

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[98] Daniel Nash to Finney, March 8, 1827, Finney Papers, OCL.

[99] H. Norton to Finney, April 30, 1827, Finney Papers, OCL.

Lyman Beecher was not opposed to the New School theology which comprehended most of Finney's views; it was his own. But, he was distressed at the controversy which tended to disrupt the evangelical unity he was seeking to establish in New England. In a letter to Nathan S. S. Beman, January, 1827, Beecher expressed his concern for the threat of "barbarism" which he saw in the Western revivals. From Boston he wrote:

> The perversion of the popular taste, and the extinction of the popular prejudice against learning, and a learned ministry, where an enlightened public sentiment, coupled with enlightened piety, is our all, would be to us, nearly, what the incursions of the northern barbarians were to the Roman Empire. It would stop all our improvements, and throw us back in civilization, science, and religion, at least a whole century. It would constitute an era of calamity never to be forgotten, and be referred to by future historians as the dark age of our republic. There are parts of our nation to which I might refer you, which were burnt over by such a revival some 20 years ago, where the abiding evils may still be seen in the state of society which has followed. And there too, with all their extravagances of falling, and groaning, and laughing, and jumping, and dancing, were regarded by many, and by some very good men, as a new dispensation of the Spirit,--a new mode of conducting revivals with power; and those who rode on the foremost waves, thought themselves to be, and were thought to be reformers in their day.[100]

The culmination of this growing strife over the new measures came in July of 1827 at a convention of representative Congregational and Presbyterian ministers from the East and from the West. The letters of Beecher and Nettleton had circulated widely bringing in a harvest of disruption, so Beman had gone to Boston to meet with Beecher and discuss means of bringing harmony and efficiency into the quest for revivals. They decided upon a convention and sent out letters of invitation with a view to settling the questions at issue. The representatives, from East and West, were to gather at New Lebanon, discuss the matters of concern, and report to the public their agreements and disagreements. Finney is at pains, in his Memoirs, to establish that this convention was in no sense a trial of himself, as was entertained in the public mind.[101] Nevertheless, Finney's primacy among the Western revivalists placed him in an exposed position.

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[100] Lyman Beecher to Nathan S. S. Beman, January, 1827, Letters of the Rev. Dr. Beecher and Rev. Mr. Nettleton, on the "New Measures" in Conducting Revivals of Religion, with a review of a Sermon by Novanglus (New York: G. & C. Carvill, 1828), p. 99.

The New England conservatives were represented by Lyman Beecher, of Boston, Heman Humphrey, President of Amherst College, Asahel Nettleton, from Connecticut, Justin Edwards, of Andover, Massachusetts, Caleb J. Tenney, of Wethersfield, and Joel Hawes, of Hartford, Connecticut; the Western new measures men were represented by Asahel S. Norton, of Clinton, Moses Gillett, of Rome, N. S. S. Beman, of Troy, D. C. Lansing, of Auburn, John Frost, of Whitesborough, William R. Weeks, of Paris, Henry Smith, of Camden, George W. Gale, of the Oneida

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[101] Finney, Memoirs, p. 210.

Academy, Silas Churchill, pastor at New Lebanon, and Charles G. Finney.[102] The Western men were all from New York state and intimately acquainted with the revivals under discussion, whereas the New England men were largely dependent upon reports which gave inadequate, sometimes exaggerated, and sometimes false information. Wright has shown that it was not until the Utica and Troy revivals that Finney received notoriety, and that most of the informed response was favorable to his ministry.[103] Much of the unfavorable response was from Unitarians and anti-revival men who exaggerated their reports to ridicule Finney and the revivals. Other information that the New England men had seems to have come from Weeks, the Congregational pastor at Paris Hill, who, in his ardent defense of the theological scheme of Emmons, was especially critical of Finney. Weeks seems to have maintained a busy correspondence with the New England conservatives, as well as his publication of pamphlets and newspaper articles.[104]

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[102] Wright, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

[103] *Ibid.*, pp. 55-66.

[104] *Ibid.*, p. 66. "It is true that the members from the West regarded with suspicion Mr. Weeks . . . as being the man who was responsible, in a considerable degree for the misapprehension of the Eastern brethren." Finney, *Memoirs*, p. 212. Also, in George W. Gale to Finney, March 11, 1827, *Finney Papers,* OCL: "You are doubtless desirous to hear the result of our Presbytery with respect to the letters from the

/east

It is very difficult, indeed, to get an accurate picture of Finney's labors during these early years, because the records are frequently biased by the prevalent party spirit. Yet, it can be said that so much of the response to his ministry was extraordinary, and easily misunderstood by those who were not present to experience the remarkable power of his preaching, that caricature and false impressions were inevitable. Especially is this true when the work of Finney was interpreted in the light of his many crude imitators. The New Lebanon Convention corrected many of these false impressions and, to a degree, stilled the angry waves. "The fact is," wrote Finney, "that had not Mr. Nettleton listened to false reports, and got committed against those revivals, no convention would have been held upon this subject, or thought of."[105] Nettleton suffered a loss of credibility at the convention which he never regained; he continued his opposition to the western measures

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(Cont.)
east. They took up this subject in an interlocutory meeting. A full and free discussion of all the points complained of by them was had; permission to interrogate members as to intercourse or communication with them was granted also. The discussion took up between two and three days when certain resolutions were passed which brother Frost was appointed to communicate to brother Nettleton, a copy of which he intends to send to you also. Mr. Weeks was there and learned that our brethren had seen his communications to Mr. N. He began to take notes of our proceedings but was not allowed to proceed in that business . . . ."

[105] Finney, Memoirs, p. 218.

with waning influence. Beecher, on the other hand, made a brave show of his opposition--he recorded in his autobiography that he said, "Finney, I know your plan, and you know I do; you mean to come to Connecticut, and carry a streak of fire to Boston. But if you attempt it, as the Lord liveth, I'll meet you at the state line, and call out all the artillery-men, and fight every inch of the way to Boston, and then I'll fight you there."--but Finney did not recall this challenge, and soon Beecher invited him to Boston.[106]

An interesting view of the substance and dynamics of the discussion is provided by an account of the propositions considered at the convention. The use of means in revivals was unanimously agreed upon in the acceptance of the proposition,

> That though revivals of religion are the work of God's Spirit, they are produced by means of divine truth and human instrumentality, and are liable to be advanced or hindered by measures which are adopted in conducting them. The idea that God ordinarily works independently of human instrumentality, or without any adaptation of means to ends, is unscriptural . . . .[107]

The discussion on female prayer in public seemed to be more a cultural reaction than a theological discussion. The proposition, "There may be circumstances in which it may be proper for a female to pray in the presence of men," was lost with only eight voting for it, and ten declining to vote.[108] The authority of the minister in his parish was assumed in the proposition, "it is improper for any person to appoint meetings in the congregations of acknowledged ministers of Christ, or to introduce any measures to promote or conduct revivals of religion, without first having obtained the approbation of said ministers."[109] Five of the pastors from central New York declined to vote on this proposition, but Finney with twelve others voted for it. There was unanimous agreement on the proposition, "Those meetings for social religious worship in which all speak according to their own inclinations, are improper; and all meetings for religious worship ought to be under the presiding influence of some person or persons."[110]

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[106] *Ibid*., p. 220.

[107] Wright, *op*. *cit*., p. 86.

The question of praying for persons by name was carefully discussed. They were not prepared to vote that the "calling of persons by name in prayer ought to be carefully avoided," but they all agreed that "the calling of persons by name in public prayer ought to be carefully avoided."[111] "Audible groaning in prayer is, in all ordinary cases, to be discouraged; and violent gestures and boisterous tones, in the same exercise, are improper," was a proposition upon which fourteen voted in favor, including Finney, and three declined voting.[112] All were agreed that "speaking against ministers of the Lord Jesus Christ, in regular standing, as cold, stupid, or dead, as unconverted, or enemies to revivals, as heretics, or enthusiasts, or disorganizers, as deranged or mad, is improper."[113]

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[108] Ibid., p. 88.

[109] Ibid.

[110] Ibid., pp. 88-89.

[111] Ibid., p. 89.

These propositions were set forth by the New England men and, as we have seen, were accepted with little dissent. The abiding opposition of the eastern party is seen in the response to two propositions Beman introduced. First, Beman submitted: "As human instrumentality must be employed in promoting revivals of religion, some things undesirable may be expected to accompany them; and as these things are often proclaimed abroad and magnified, great caution should be exercised in listening to unfavorable reports."[114] Norton, Beecher, Tenney, Weeks, Weed, and Edwards declined to vote, putting on record that, "as the above does not appear to us to be in the course of Divine Providence called for, we therefore decline to act."[115] Eleven voted in favor of the resolution. The same response was given Beman's second proposition, "Although revivals of religion may be so improperly conducted as to be attended with disastrous consequences to the church and souls of men, yet it is true that the best conducted revivals are liable to be stigmatized and opposed by lukewarm professors and the enemies of evangelical truth."[116]

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[112] Ibid.

[113] Ibid.

[114] Ibid., p. 92.

[115] Ibid.

The convention closed, however, with a unanimity with regard to two resolutions: "Evening meetings continued to an unreasonable hour ought to be studiously avoided." "In accounts of revivals of religion, great care should be taken that they be not exaggerated."[117] The proceedings of the New Lebanon Convention were published in the New York Observer, August 4, 1827; and they became the subject of an unusual amount of discussion in the religious papers. When the letters of Beecher and Nettleton were published in 1828, and considered in the light of the convention, it became evident to many that the New England men had been misinformed about the western revivals and that there was nothing seriously objectionable in the new measures connected with Finney's revivals.[118] What we have in the New Lebanon debates is an instance of the increasing confrontation between the cultural adolescence of the frontier and the cautious establishment of the East, a confrontation which was occurring similarly in the Jacksonian political and economic spheres.[119]

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[116] Ibid.

[117] Ibid., p. 93.

[118] Ibid., p. 94. This is also the conclusion of Wright, who was disposed to favor Finney; but the evidence seems to support the conclusion.

As Finney saw his life in retrospect, he made it clear that the strife over new measures did not modify his understanding of how to conduct a revival. In his Memoirs he wrote:

> As I have since labored extensively in this country, and in Great Britain, and no exceptions have been taken to my measures, it has been assumed and asserted that since the opposition made by Mr. Nettleton and Dr. Beecher, I have been reformed, and have given up the measures they complained of. This is an entire mistake. I have always and everywhere, used all the measures I used in those revivals and have often added other measures, whenever I have deemed it expedient. I have never seen the necessity of reformation in this respect. Were I to live my life over again, I think that, with the experience of more than forty years in revival labors, I should, under the same circumstances, use substantially the same measures that I did then.[120]

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[119] Cpr. Charles C. Cole, Jr., "The New Lebanon Convention," New York History, XXXI, 4 (October, 1950), pp. 385-397. Cole argues, "This debate was, in one sense, a battle between the tidewater and the frontier (p. 395)." Likewise, the emotional response to revivals must be understood in terms of non-theological factors. Everett D. Martin has written: "It is a commonplace of modern psychology that in any given situation individuals will react in different ways determined largely by their basic personality traits, ancestral background, early experiences, and a complex of nonrational factors as yet dimly understood. The suspicion grows, moreover, that there emerges at times a collective mentality which finds in the crowd an outlet for repressed emotions." Quoted in William L. Langer, "The Next Assignment," American Historical Review, 63 (1958), 290.

[120] Finney, Memoirs, p. 222.

At the meeting of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, May 27, 1828, several men signed the following document and had it published:

> The subscribers having had opportunity for free conversation on certain subjects pertaining to revivals of religion, concerning which we have differed, are of the opinion that the general interests of religion would not be promoted by any further publications on those subjects, or personal discussions; and we do hereby engage to cease from all publications, correspondences, conversations, and conduct designed and calculated to keep those subjects before the public mind; and that, so far as our influence may avail, we will exert it to induce our friends on either side to do the same.[121]

Those signing the document were Lyman Beecher, Dirck C. Lansing, S. C. Aikin, A. D. Eddy, C. G. Finney, Sylvester Holmes, Ebenezer Cheever, John Frost, Nathan S. S. Beman, Noah Coe, E. W. Gilbert, and Joel Parker. Finney said he did not remember signing the document, in his Memoirs, but his signature was there.[122]

The aftermath of the New Lebanon Convention was characterized by a sense of elation among the Finneyites mingled with a continuing suspicion of the other party. Gale wrote to Finney at New Lebanon:

> The Lord has doubtless disappointed your opponents and we shall all be in danger of being elated and of not feeling our need of his help as we have done and therefore not watch and pray so much--we shall be in danger

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[121] Wright, op. cit., pp. 94-95.

[122] Finney, Memoirs, p. 223. Cf. Fletcher, op. cit., I, p. 16.

> of boasting of what *we* have done or *not* done--how *we* have foiled our enemies and opposers instead of ascribing the honor to God. We shall be in great danger of speaking out things in relation to the convention or to Mr. Nettleton or Doct. Beecher that ought not be spoken tho true and which will come to their ears distorted and perverted. Your whole movements and records will be watched and reported and you ought therefore to have power over your language and over your whole self because of the angels *alias* spies which will be about you.[123]

Again, Aiken wrote to Finney at Wilmington on January 1, 1828:

> We are aware perfectly of the great advantage Nettleton has over us by the unbounded influences which he has acquired in the American Church. But I feel for us that *truth will support itself* and I had rather be on the side than on the "side of Plato." Their advantageous ground is such however as renders it very important that we proceed with *great caution*, yet firmly and fearlessly relying upon the arm of the Lord God of Israel. In him, if I am not greatly mistaken, I feel a growing confidence as to this matter, and a kind of assurance, that if we engage in this conflict with a right spirit, we shall come off conquerors.[124]

It is in the light of these letters from Gale and Aiken that we see the significance of the Philadelphia resolution of May 27, 1828, signed by Aiken and Finney. Many years later, in 1868, when Lewis Tappan was encouraging Finney to publish his "Narrative" of the revivals and the Beecher-Nettleton disputes, the role of Finney in the revivals and the controversy was reflected upon:

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[123] George W. Gale to Finney, July 28, 1827, *Finney Papers*, OCL.

[124] S. C. Aiken to Finney, January 1, 1828, *Finney Papers*, OCL.

> I do not think it is subject to the charge of egotism. On the contrary, considering your agency in . . . . /the revivals/ the narrative is remarkably free from such a charge.
>
> . . . .
>
> I put no confidence in Dr. B's statements, so far as they differ from yours. His mind was differently constructed. Besides, his action was more impulsive than yours. . . . I thought everything of him until I knew you. You had system and he jokes. He had some qualities superior to yours. Notwithstanding this he did not always follow his convictions of duty. He believed in the doctrine of expediency and a criminal excess I thought. Of course his fence was in Virginia fashion, while yours was on a straight line.[125]

Two points should be emphasized with regard to the aftermath of the New Lebanon Convention. First, there was a great deal of sectional feeling manifested between the East and the West, of which the convention was but one instance. The western ministers were also reacting against the patronizing attitude of the eastern ministers in the operation of home missions, a problem which became critical in the 1840's.[126] In 1830, an Old School leader in Cincinnati, Joshua L. Wilson, was advocating a western Assembly:

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[125] Lewis Tappan to Finney, June 10, 1868, Finney Papers, OCL.

[126] "It is quite apparent that sectional feeling played a large part in the theocrat's concern for the West. This appears clearly from the patronizing attitude assumed unconsciously, no doubt--by Humphrey, Bushnell, Lyman Beecher, and others. It appears even more forcibly in the reaction of the frontier preachers who opposed home missions chiefly because they resented the interference of the Eastern clergy whose political and social thinking they regarded as "aristocratic" and foreign to the West." John R. Bodo, The Protestant Clergy and Public Issues, 1812-1848 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954), p. 162.

> But we need a Western Assembly. The line between us and our eastern brethren is not so broad and deep as the Atlantic Ocean but it is more prominent. The western churches cannot be represented at Phila. nor could the eastern at Cincinnati. The Genl. Assembly is not as it ought to be "the collected wisdom and the united voice of the whole church." An eastern and western Assembly might harmonize by a delegated correspondence and by holding their meetings at different seasons of the year. We should probably gain the attendance of corresponding members and afford them an opportunity of seeing what we are.[127]

This sectional feeling was a significant element in the controversies over the new measures in the Church. It continued until the antislavery issue reoriented sectionalism to a North versus South alignment. Second, although Finney seems to have come away from the New Lebanon Convention unscathed, there must have been something in his language and manner that was less acceptable to more refined tastes than those of the frontier. He was much more refined in the Rochester Revival of 1830-31; perhaps he took to heart the comment of Thomas Thindale, Jr., who wrote to him from New Lebanon:

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[127] J. L. Wilson to Rev. Mr. Steel, March 17, 1830, in W. W. Sweet, Religion on the American Frontier, Vol. II, The Presbyterians 1783-1840 (New York: Harper & Bros., 1936), pp. 735-736.

I would not be understood as dictating to you a course which you are under obligation to follow, nor would I have written at all on the subject, did I not feel confident you have independance enough of mind, and attachment to duty to be influenced by nothing but what the word of God would warrant and experience confirm, and all I have to say on the subject I would comprise in a few words. Strive, in the manner of preaching, and language you use, to make this impression, with respect to yourself, that you love those you address, that benevolence alone actuates your bosom, and then they will have nothing left to quarrel with but the truth, before which they cannot stand.[128]

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[128] Thomas Thindale, Jr. to Finney, June 18, 1828, Finney Papers, OCL.

II. THE CALL OF TWO FRONTIERS

A. A Decision for the East

After the notable successes at Utica and Troy, and the experiences of New Lebanon, Finney went to Stephentown. This village was just north of New Lebanon and had a Presbyterian Church which was without a pastor and in a severe decline. Finney's ministry stimulated a revival there, and his circle of friends and supporters widened.[1] Calls to "come over into Macedonia, and help us," came from far and near as ministers and pious laymen sought the services of Finney. The pressing question for Finney was no longer what measures to use in revivals, but *where* to use them; where was his *Macedonia*? In the second and third decade of the nineteenth century there were two frontiers, not one. There was the westward-moving frontier, with its social and economic opportunities investing the free lands of the West; and there was the frontier of the emerging cities. Finney knew the frontier from his youth, and he had experienced the vitality of the growing cities in western New York. From the West came the call to Ohio, which was denominated "the Valley of the Mississippi," a land which was "in a forming state ready to receive any

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1. Finney, *Memoirs*, pp. 226-233.

impress which may be given it";[2] and from the East came the urgent call to New York City, a burgeoning metropolis, "the headquarters of Satan."[3]

Some Finneyites were dubious about a move to the cities of the East, because they knew of the opposition there to revivals. Theodore Weld advised Finney: "Don't be in too great haste to get hold of the cities. . . . Kindle back fires, BACK FIRES far and wide. Let them stretch over the interior; the while you are engaged there the cities are preparing fast --when ripe--at the favorable nick of time--give the word--rally your forces and in the twinkling of an eye make a plunge --and they are a wreck."[4] George W. Gale was concerned about Finney going to the ground "where the good old pilgrims first set their feet": he wrote,

> Some considerations speak favorably of your going east, others seem to forbid it. One against it which would weigh much is you would have to sustain the weight of the contest with Unitarians and instead of receiving aid from those who ought to aid you you would probably find them throwing obstacles in your way. Let Doct. Beecher (etc.) who have buckeled on the harness to fight Unitarians fight it out. The Presbyterian Ch. furnishes an ample field, and is the field where you have been born and nurtured.[5]

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[2] Asa Mahan (and T. D. Weld) to Finney, February 28, 1832, Finney Papers, OCL.

[3] Lewis Tappan to Finney, March 16, 1832, Finney Papers, OCL.

[4] Theodore D. Weld (and M. Brayton) to Finney, March 19, 1827, Finney Papers, OCL.

[5] George W. Gale to Finney, September 6, 1827, Finney Papers, OCL.

However, the eastern cities were calling, and the need was great. The Reverend J. P. Patterson wrote to Finney from Philadelphia, "I think this region is ripe for revivals and all that is wanting is a proper person to sound the alarm. . . . I think you might be extensively useful here, perhaps more so just now than any man in America."[6]

While at Stephentown, N.Y., Finney received an invitation from E. M. Gilbert, who announced that the vicinity of Wilmington, Delaware was open to him. "Even the Quakers are inquiring after you"; he enthusiastically reported, "and as you are not a 'hireling' minister, etc., do not receive a state salary, I have no doubt you would have many of them to hear you wh/ich/ is a compliment they do not often pay to anyone."[7] There was a keen desire to enlarge the revival enterprise which muffled the ominous sounds of reaction to Finney's "measures" and "innovations" which had set afire western New York. Gilbert instructed Finney:

> I have no question however that you will find many friends, and many pulpits open to you not only in this Presbytery, but in the other Presbyteries of Synod, especially if you come on soon, and before Mr. Nettleton has time to prejudice the churches against you. Dr. Dickey, of our Pby, a Scotchman, and pretty stiff

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6. J. L. Patterson to Finney, April 20, 1827, Finney Papers, OCL.

7. E. M. Gilbert to Finney, November 12, 1827, Finney Papers, OCL.

> in the old school system, said to Dr. Magraw the other day, "My Brother, we must have a Revival man amongst us --an orthodox one, if we can get him, but if not still we must have one." He is one of the best of our ministers, and should he receive you, hardly a minister but will feel perfectly safe in inviting you to his pulpit, notwithstanding all the horrible things they are told of you. In fact, one minister in this quarter began to feel that they must have Revivals, or all will go to desolation; and however sticklish for doctrine, would be glad to see an awakening in their bounds even by a Hopkinsian![8]

Gilbert had heard Finney at New Lebanon, and though he was "very old-school" in his theological views, as Finney put it, he very cordially received him.[9]

After successful meetings were initiated in Wilmington, Finney went to Philadelphia twice each week to preach for Patterson. His invitation had been put to Finney in such terms as to convince Finney of the strategic nature of revivals in the great population centers. He wrote:

> In the midst of 20,000 souls . . . I groan and am distressed, when I know that but a small part of these go to any place of worship whatever and consequently are going to destruction.
>
> Would you not have an opportunity of doing good on a larger scale here. Paul went to great cities first, indeed chiefly. Cities have an amazing influence on the community at large and in that way would not your influence be extended more generally through the community.
>
> Another reason. Revivals are common in the North

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[8] Ibid.

[9] Finney, Memoirs, p. 234.

> and East, few oppose them when their character and usefulness is established, but it is not so on this way. Even many of our ministers here doubt the utility of Revivals of religion. Another reason. Philadelphia is the great centre of Presbyterianism in the U.S.A. Thousands of ministers mingle with our citizens and if our citizens should /renew/ true revival sentiments and understand revival preaching, then intercourse with Presbyterian ministers annually could not fail to be of great advantage to the latter.
>
> This reason might be added. I believe some of our revival ministers have wrong views of cities thinking that revivals cannot occur in them. Indeed I know they are wrong and that revivals will be in cities as well as the country with the right kind of preaching and management.[10]

After the call to Philadelphia, Finney was to maintain his commitment to revival preaching on the frontier of the emerging cities. Even after he went to Oberlin, in Ohio, he took seasonal leaves from the college for his itinerant preaching in the cities.

Patterson held the Princeton views of theology and found Finney's new school preaching hard going; but he was convinced that the Lord was blessing it, as the congregations were packed at every meeting. Finney recalls that Patterson said to him, "Brother Finney, if the Presbyterian ministers in this city find out your views, and what you are preaching to the people, they will hunt you out of the city as they would a wolf."[11] That they did not, but rather invited him to preach in their pulpits, was a demonstration of the theological change which was gradually taking place. It was Finney's remembrance that he preached in all the Presbyterian Churches save the Arch Street Church. L. R. Shipherd, a Finneyite from the Troy revival, was ecstatic over the news from Philadelphia. He wrote to Finney: "It really appears to me your entree into Philadelphia was the entering of a wedge that will split the dull mass into splinters . . . . and introduce a new era for the Lord's Kingdom. If that city fall, New York must next bow, and let this be accomplished. 'All new England' must succumb and back Finneyism."[12]

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[10] J. L. Patterson to Finney, December 14, 1827, Finney Papers, OCL.

[11] Finney, Memoirs, p. 240.

Finney's "entree into Philadelphia" was definitely appreciated in many quarters, and a committee, appointed by the 1st Presbyterian Church in the Northern Liberties of Philadelphia to draft resolutions "expressive of the estimation in which we hold the Rev. Mr. C. G. Finney as a Man and a Minister of the Gospel," made the following report:

> Whereas, the Rev. Mr. C. G. Finney has been labouring amongst us for the past Six Months and as far as we know, has conducted himself as becometh a faithful Minister of the Gospel of our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; and Whereas, he is now about to leave us, we feel it our duty to make some humble and kind expressions of our gratitude to God for sending him among us; and of our tender regard for him.
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> . . . .

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[12] L. R. Shipherd to Finney, March 27, 1828, Finney Papers, OCL.

> Resolved, that we consider him a truly evangelical Preacher, sound in the faith; mighty in word and doctrine, and sincerely devoted to the cause of his Lord and Master.[13]

D. L. Dodge, a pious merchant of New York City, like Shipherd, was convinced that the revivals in Philadelphia would prepare the way for Finney in New York. "If the Lord appears in power at Philadelphia," he wrote, "opposition will soon spring up and if possible without sacrificing truth and plainness do try to keep under the wings of some of the good ministers that they may share the responsibility with you. Dr. Wilson having taken you into his pulpit it has almost petrified opposition here. He has more weight here than perhaps any minister in the Presbyterian Church."[14]

In the winter of 1829-30, Finney went to Reading, Pennsylvania; and in the spring of 1830 he went to Lancaster.[15] In both places his preaching stimulated revivals. Even before these moves, however, he had received correspondence from New York encouraging him to come. D. L. Dodge reported to Finney, in December of 1827:

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[13] The Committee of the 1st Presbyterian Church in the Northern Liberties of Philadelphia to Finney, July 14, 1828, Finney Papers, OCL.

[14] D. L. Dodge to Finney, February 25, 1829, Finney Papers, OCL.

[15] Finney, Memoirs, pp. 258, 269.

> Mr. Phelps and myself went up to see Dr. Spring, but he was out. Mr. P. went again today and had an interview with him. Dr. S[pring] voluntarily stated that he was uncommitted either way but regretted Mr. N[ettleton]'s publication said it was altogether uncalled for. Two other ministers have called and are anxious to see you members of our Presbytery. Dr. S. regretted you went out of town so soon. . . . From all I can learn I believe at least four ministers in our Presbytery would give you not only the right hand of fellowship but open their pulpits to you if they could be satisfied you would not introduce some things that has (sic) been such an occasion of handle to opposers.[16]

The situation was apparently warming toward Finney in New York, for Dodge could write in June of 1828: "I have recently had a full conversation with Dr. Spring it is no longer doubtfull in my mind whether he would invite you to preach if you were here he said he should invite you as soon as Mr. N[ettleton] and intends to treat both parties as brethren in good standing and said plainly if you were to labour with him a while he should expect a revival."[17] This new feeling toward Finney was the result of a meeting, lasting for several days, which was held at Phelp's home in New York, in December of 1827. The participants at this conference were Theodore Weld, Aiken, Beman, Lansing and Zebulon R. Shipherd, Finneyites all, and Zephaniah Platt, the Dodges, Phelps, and certain New York ministers, including Gardiner Spring, the

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16. D. L. Dodge to Finney, December 18, 1827, Finney Papers, OCL.

17. Ibid., June 26, 1828.

influential pastor of the Brick Presbyterian Church, and Samuel H. Cox, the eccentric pastor of the Laight Street Church.[18]

Arthur Tappan and the Dodges favored Finney's appearance in New York as a supply preacher for Cox, during his absence. In August, 1828, Finney accepted the invitation and preached for the first time in New York, in the Laight Street Church. Cox was apparently unhappy with this arrangement, but Tappan assured Finney that the sentiments of the congregation were entirely favorable to him. In answer to Finney's query on this matter, Tappan responded:

> Your letter read this morning is the first intimation I have had that Mr. Cox has expressed any dissatisfaction at your having preached for us during his absence. I can scarcely believe it true, but will make inquiry and write you again.
>
> Whatever Mr. Cox's sentiments may be upon the subject, I can assure you I have heard but one sentiment from his people and that is entire approbation and satisfaction. As it regards the report that "you intruded yourself upon us" I can say from my own knowledge . . . that it is so far from being founded on fact that directly the reverse is the truth.[19]

It was not until the autumn of 1829 that Finney had an opportunity to return to New York and organize protracted meetings for revival. Anson G. Phelps, disappointed that invitations did not come from the ministers, hired a vacant church on Vandewater Street and sent Finney an urgent request to come there and preach. "I did so," recalled Finney, "and there we had a powerful revival."[20] From Rome, New York, Moses Gillet called for Finney to be especially careful about his doctrine and preaching. "It is my prayer that you may be useful in N. Y. But remember that not a soul will be converted without the special agency of the Holy Ghost." Gillet continued:

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[18] Cf. Fletcher, op. cit., I, pp. 26-27.

[19] Arthur Tappan to Finney, September 25, 1828, Finney Papers, OCL. For evidence on the time of Finney's appearance, cf. Phelps to Finney, August 21, 1828, Finney Papers, OCL.

> Since you left here, I have thought whether you might not be in danger of preaching too much against Ministers. I know they are wrong, in a great many things. But whether it is best to come right out in preaching against them, may admit of a doubt. I am inclined to /think/ it will do no good to say much about them in the pulpit. And some caution may be advisable, even in private conversation. If your preaching and conduct be better than theirs, it will be seen; and this is the best influence one can have respecting them.[21]

Finney seems to have had a tendency to overstate his case for the agency of man in conversion, likewise to make public criticism of ministers who did not support his revivals. Nevertheless, the revival at Vandewater Street continued for three months, then Phelps purchased a church on Prince Street, near Broadway, where the converts from Vandewater and Prince Street were constituted as a congregation. This revival prepared the way for the organization of the Free Presbyterian Churches in the city; many of the converts who composed those churches were from the Prince Street Church. Also, it was the occasion of the conversion of Lewis Tappan from Unitarianism.[22] The Tappan brothers became notable supporters of Finney, and leaders in the antislavery and other voluntary associations for benevolence which marked the era.

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[20] Finney, Memoirs, p. 275.

[21] M. Gillet to Finney, October 26, 1829, Finney Papers, OCL.

In spite of the success of these revivals in New York, many old Finneyites continued to believe that the cities were poor places to promote revivals. For instance, Gale seemed to have a cultural antipathy to the city which was expressed in these words of caution to Finney:

> I am still of the belief that cities are poor places to promote Revivals, at least such as we have in the country. The business, the bustle, the dissipation, the etiquette and a countless number and variety of things seem to stand in the way of good. There is a kind of moral atmosphere so to speak even in the religious world in such places which seems to taint and transform every thing about them. There are so many fine things and so many great things that every body almost imbibes seemingly a spirit of aspiring to be fine or great. I do not know that it is so, but so it would seem. Is it not a fact that good men and good ministers of the gospel undergo a good deal of change when exposed to the operation of such causes. If they have been Revival men does not their revival spirit seem to evaporate? I have heard the question asked will not brother Finney catch the same fever or language to that effect--will he not have his mind turned off at least from the business of converting souls to Christ to the business of converting men to some peculiarity of sentiment, to some theory or

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22. Finney, Memoirs, p. 280f.

> speculation? Is there not danger of his seeking to be a great intellectualist? So people will talk, but if they are jealous with a "godly jealousy" it will do no harm to them nor to their friend for whose success in winning souls to Christ they will not cease to pray.[23]

But all were agreed that the moral condition of the nation required a continuing revival. "The crisis, my dear brother," wrote William Wisner, "is fast forming in the moral condition of our country. . . . With all the means which we are using infidelity and Popery are spreading faster in America than true religion, and while iniquity is coming in like a flood the love of many is waxing cold." He continued, "I sometimes feel like leaving my charge and going into some of the waste places of Zion to proclaim the great truths of the gospel."[24] In 1830 he went to Rochester to assist Finney in the great revival there.

B. The Rochester Revival of 1830-1831

Having stimulated a mighty revival impulse in the churches of New York City, Finney departed for Rochester and one of the most notable revivals in American church history.[25] Rochester was a booming town in the 1830's as a result of economic growth experienced after the building of the Great Western Canal. The fruitful Genesee Valley yielded a great harvest of wheat, which was ground into flour under the power of the falls of the Genesee River, and given easy access to world markets by the Canal.[26] The Presbyterians were well established in Rochester, ministering largely to the New England population there. The First Church was established before the building of the canal, and the Second ("Brick") Presbyterian Church and Third Presbyterian Church were founded soon after the canal was opened.[27] It was to the Third Presbyterian Church that Finney came in September of 1830, to supply the pulpit that Joel Parker had left to assume pastoral charge of the First Free Presbyterian Church in New York City, founded under the stimulus of Finney's revivals there. "The way was opened," remarks Fletcher, "for Finney to boom religion in the Genesee boom town."[28]

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[23] George W. Gale to Finney, January 21, 1830, Finney Papers, OCL.

[24] William Wisner to Finney, November 16, 1829, Finney Papers, OCL.

[25] Cf. Finney, Memoirs, pp. 284-301; also an excellent account in Fletcher, op. cit., I, pp. 17-24.

Finney's ministry at Rochester was sensational from the very beginning. Soon after he arrived the pulpit of the Second Church was vacated, and the pastor of the First Church rendered every support. Finney gave his energies to these three congregations without stint: from September 10, 1830 to March 6, 1831, he preached ninety-eight sermons and attended un-numbered "anxious meetings."[29] After one of the early meetings in the old First Church during which the structure of the packed church began to give way,--the congregation stampeded in panic out of all exits; a few jumped out of windows into the waters of the canal--the preaching services were held in the Second and Third Churches.[30] No one was killed in this accident, and the excitement over it seemed only to create more interest in the revival meetings. The revival continued with power through the winter months of January and February; and during the latter part of February and early March, the almost exhausted Finney had the assistance of nine other ministers from western New York churches. The new measures for promoting revivals--including "the anxious seat" which Finney claims to have used only rarely before Rochester[31]--reaped a harvest of souls as bountiful as the rich wheat harvests of the Genesee Valley.

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[26] Neil Adams McNall, An Agricultural History of the Genesee Valley 1790-1860 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1952), passim.

[27] Fletcher, op. cit., p. 17.

[28] Ibid., p. 18.

A notable result of the Rochester revival was the conversion of "the great mass of the most influential people,

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29. Ibid., p. 19.

30. Finney, Memoirs, pp. 290-291.

31. Ibid., p. 288.

both men and women," with the resultant "change in the order, sobriety, and morality of the city."[32] The conversion of these "influential people" was a wonderful joy to Finney; but it seemed to pose a special problem for some of the frontier Finneyites. "I want you to think of one point," wrote Kirk, "which interests me very much in connection with the revival in Rochester. I have seen rich and great men converted; but very few of them really so broken down as to be truly revival Christians one year after. Make thorough work with those great men. Keep them like little children at the feet of Jesus."[33] Hundreds of new converts were added to the three Presbyterian churches as a result of this Finney revival, which also extended to the Baptists and even to the Episcopalians.[34]

A second result of the Rochester revival was the founding of two new "Free" Presbyterian Churches. The Rochester Free Presbyterian Church was short lived, lasting only from 1832 to 1838. The Bethel Free Church had able and enthusiastic Finney men as leaders and developed into a permanent congregation, the Rochester Central Presbyterian Church, which was later instrumental in calling Finney back to Rochester for the revivals of 1842 and 1857.[35] A third significant result was the enlistment of a phalanx of zealous revivalist Christians, mostly business and professional men or youths. These were active in the evangelistic cause and thorough supporters of Finney.[36] The cohorts of Finney in New York had founded the New York Evangelist in 1830, as the organ of the new measures revival movement, largely as a response to Finney's successful meetings there. This publication was financed, at first, by Zephaniah Platt and organized under the editorship of N. A. Saxton. It was extremely difficult to get the Evangelist going in a field of well-established publications, and the editor looked to Finney, and his popularity, for aid. A sorrowful note came to him from Saxton:

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[32] *Ibid.*, pp. 297-298.

[33] Kirk to Finney, November 23, 1830, *Finney Papers*, OCL.

[34] Cf. Fletcher, *op. cit.*, p. 21, for a general report of the available statistics.

> All the other papers but ours are getting particulars of the Revival at Rochester. Do send me a particular account for publication. . . . The time is at hand when people generally subscribe for a paper, and we must receive great help from the West at the commencement of this year 1831 or we shall be crippled in spite of our teeth. (Inter nos) we shall have sunk $2500.00 in the enterprise before our first year closes. . . . The getting up of our paper was considered by the great man as a "new measure," and so the tide sets heavily against us. The importance of having a fearless and independent paper in such a central place as this city, you of course

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[35] Ibid., p. 21.

[36] Cf. Fletcher, op. cit., pp. 23-24, for an account of these men.

> understand. If we should be obliged to discontinue the Evangelist thousands would give the shout of triumph. You have no idea how we are pressed with pecuniary responsibility.[37]

The next year the Tappans took the paper over and gave the editorship to the Rev. Joshua Leavitt. Under his leadership, and with the aid of Finney's sermons and lectures, the Evangelist became an important factor in disseminating the religious and moral values of the new measures revival men.[38]

The Rochester revival was a benchmark in the career of Charles G. Finney from which the remainder of his life and thought must be measured. The unusual number of converts became a seal of his ministry, and a challenge to the church at large. Out of this number came a growing list of Finney supporters which greatly enhanced his future ministry. The program of the Free Presbyterian Churches in Rochester and New York raised new issues concerning the nature of the church and ministry; and, the supporting measure of religious journalism became a standard means of informing a partisan community. The impression of Finney's ministry at Rochester, written by the journalist Henry Brewster Stanton, shows us how many received him at that time:

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[37] N. A. Saxton to Finney, November 29, 1830, Finney Papers, OCL.

[38] Cf. Fletcher, op. cit., p. 28; and Cross, op. cit., p. 156. Leavitt left the editor's desk in 1837. The reporting of Finney's Lectures on Revivals (1834-35) was a great boost to circulation.

> In October, 1830, Charles G. Finney, the famous evangelist came to Rochester to supply the pulpit of the Third Presbyterian Church. I had been absent a few days and on my return was asked to hear him. It was in the afternoon. A tall, grave-looking man, dressed in an unclerical suit of gray, ascended the pulpit . . . I listened. It did not sound like preaching, but like a lawyer arguing a case before a court and jury. This was not singular, perhaps, for the speaker had been a lawyer before he became a clergyman. The discourse was a chain of logic, brightened by felicity of illustration and enforced by urgent appeals from a voice of great compass and melody. Mr. Finney was then in the fulness of his powers. He had won distinction elsewhere, but was little known in Rochester. He preached there six months, usually speaking three times on the Sabbath, and three or four times during the week. His style was particularly attractive for lawyers. He illustrated his points frequently and happily by reference to legal principle. It began with the judges, the lawyers, the physicians, the bankers, and the merchants, and worked its way down to the bottom of society, till nearly everybody had joined one or the other of the churches controlled by the different denominations. I have heard many celebrated pulpit orators in various parts of the world. Taken all in all, I never heard the superior of Charles G. Finney.[39]

Although the successes of the Rochester revival quieted the concern of many concerning the manner of his preaching, the content of his message was still held suspect. In retrospect, it would seem that Finney was fundamentally in agreement with the New England theologians of his time. This was the burden of an article in The Oberlin Evangelist (1851) concerning the revivals of 1830 and 1831:

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[39] Quoted in, Edward R. Foreman, ed., Publications of the Rochester Historical Society, IV (The Rochester Historical Society, 1925), 288-289.

> From the most intimate and repeated conversations as well as from his discourses, I have the most perfect confidence that his views at that time on all the important points in the whole plan of salvation, agreed most perfectly with the leading divines in New-England. I have it in my power to show that if such men as Drs. Perine, L. Beecher, B. Dickinson, W. H. Cox, Wm. Patton, Etc., were Orthodox at that time, brother Finney was equally so. I am aware that he dwelt more on the distinction between natural and moral ability and inability, as defended by Edwards and Smalley, than what had been customary by most of our preachers previous to that period, and I have but little doubt that it will be acknowledged by all who were acquainted with the state of the public mind at that time, that such a course was demanded to meet the antinomian impressions that so extensively prevailed. . . . I have seen so many changes in the characters of men that were an honor to truth and to God, as the result of brother Finney's labors, that if others in view of the same have felt that they saw reason to shed tears of blood, those tears I am confident would not equal in number the songs and the joys occasioned by the same among the people of God.[40]

The candid judgment of friends, like Sylvester Eaton, indicated "that prejudice was dying away";[41] and reports from New

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[40] J. Hopkins, "The Revivals of 1830 and 1831, and the Labors of Prof. Finney," The Oberlin Evangelist, XIII, No. 14 (July 2, 1851), 108. This was a response to a letter from Finney in England, where information had reached him that there were those who deprecated the nature of these revivals, and "have wept tears of blood in view of the results." Finney's letter, dated London, December 12, 1850, was published in The Oberlin Evangelist, XIII, No. 10 (May 7, 1851), 76.

[41] Sylvester Eaton to Finney, October 9, 1830, Finney Papers, OCL. "I hear that the Lord is blessing your labours at Rochester . . . . Although I have thought that there were some things in your manner of preaching and talking, somewhat objectionable, yet I never lost confidence in you as a man who loved the truth, and who anxiously desired the salvation of souls. . . . I must therefore receive and love him whom the Lord blesses. . . . The people of this place /Buffalo/ have heard about you, and not long since, I know there was a great deal of prejudice against you, but I do think I have lately discovered evidence, that prejudice was dying away."

York encouraged Finney that, "Christians here are looking to Rochester with wonder; and many with great rejoicing, for the blessing of God so mightily showered upon that wicked city."[42] Brown went on to say, "In conversation with Lewis Tappan, the other day, he remarked that were you now to come here those in Mr. Parker's congregation who were shy of you when you were here could now take you by the hand. Prejudices against you are very much done away here, from the revival in Rochester."[43] The excitement over the successes of the revival led many to think millennial thoughts, like Pierpont, who exclaimed: "Oh! what does the Lord mean New York shall do. Methinks the Millenium (sic) has already commenced and that this state is the starting point."[44]

During the Rochester Revival there was a certain refinement which took place in Finney's manner of preaching. The rough edges of his frontier style were smoothed, as he adapted himself to the urban frontier and the ways of the East. Finney was not the only one to notice it. "There is much truth in what you say about the character of your preaching," remarked Norton. "I think that your preaching a few years ago, was better adapted to such an assembly than it is now."[45]

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[42] L. Brown to Finney, January 6, 1831, Finney Papers, OCL.

[43] Ibid.

[44] H. B. Pierpont to Finney, December 25, 1830, Finney Papers, OCL.

E. W. Clarke ventured a similar comment:

> I have been deeply interested in observing the blessing, the rich, converting, saving blessing with which your labours have been attended for several years. I have also been an anxious observer of the circumstances and effect of your ministry for the last year. If I have rightly learned it has failed to produce to the same extent those soul saving results as formerly. I have sought the reason, and am so confident that I have discovered the true reason, that I venture with the kindest and most affectionate feelings to mention my thoughts to you.
>
> I fear that the peculiar circumstances in which you have been placed, have led you rather to a discussion in your public ministrations, of abstract theological subjects, than to those soul stirring appeals to the heart and the conscience, by which you once brought so many sinners down at the feet of Jesus.
>
> I love your theology, I believe it to be God's everlasting truth. Still I believe multitudes of impenitent sinners may embrace it to the full extent in theory, and yet for the want of that anxious, urgent, burning application to the conscience, which formerly accompanied your exhibitions of truth, may and do reject the Saviour, and remain unconverted and unsaved.[46]

The somewhat erratic Luther Myrick also subjected Finney's new manner to his scrutiny. He was worried about his colleague of the frontier revivals in the 1820's:

> Have been not a little troubled; for I have understood by those that heard you preach that there was no little change in your preaching from what it used

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[45] H. Norton to Finney, March 19, 1832, Finney Papers, OCL.

[46] E. W. Clarke, May 23, 1832, Finney Papers, OCL.

> to be. Not so much point. Not so much unction. More regard to niceness of diction. Your manner was different. Not that holy boldness as usual. I have been afraid that elevation would prove your ruin. I hope it is not so. Let me speak freely though your inferior--I love you as I do my own soul God knows. Father Nash is gone! Br. Finney is almost the only one of 1826 that is left--I mean whose labours God blessed. . . . I hear some worldly professors and earthly men pleasing Ministers say, Finney has got pretty rational![47]

What these men could not seem to understand was that Finney had gained a new measure of intellectual and aesthetic culture, which made him more acceptable to the "middle class" to which he now ministered on the urban frontier.

Just before the spring of 1831, Finney left Rochester for Schenectady, New York, where he was to preach at Union College. As he passed through Auburn he was approached by several laymen, and the pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, Josiah Hopkins, with an ardent plea to remain in Auburn. Although completely fatigued, after the rigors of the final weeks at Rochester, Finney consented to remain if they would accept his conditions. In order to conserve his depleted energies he agreed to preach twice on Sunday and twice during the week; and this he did for six weeks, leaving the rest of the labor to the pastor of the First Church.[48] A letter from Syracuse identifies the revival; and warned Finney not to remain in Auburn:

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[47] Luther Myrick, September 3, 1832, Finney Papers, OCL.

[48] Finney, Memoirs, pp. 303ff.

> We have heard there is a great revival in Auburn. I tell you plainly br. F. I feared this might prove a snare to your feet, this in connection with the importunity of our friends in A/uburn/. It seemed to me so plain that your services were more, yes a thousand fold more needed, in fifty places than there, where you cannot turn a corner without meeting a minister, I could not forbear to speak my mind right out to you. Now I beseech you -- not to stay there.[49]

The revival at Auburn prepared the way to Buffalo. Finney had received an invitation from Abner Bryant, in October of 1830, to come to Buffalo. The letter of invitation gives us an interesting description of the religious situation which Finney confronted.

> The village of Buffalo contains about seven thousand souls, about one sixth of which are under 14 years of age, a most interesting population, composed mostly of those about middle age and under, thrown together from every part of the Union, and aside from the ties that binds Christian hearts together, none other one acknowledged but what arises from similarity of pursuit, and the attainment of the one great object--money . . . . The Sabbath disregarded by the great body of the people, professing Christians asleep, very few to care for Zion, to weep over her desolations.
>
> We have four Religious Societies organized according to law, and have a legal existence.
>
> In our village are about 500 professing Christians.
>
> About 1200 persons attend publick worship on the Sabbath.
>
> About 300 Children and youths attend Sabbath Schools.[50]

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[49] J. W. Adams to Finney, March 10, 1831, Finney Papers, OCL.

[50] Abner Bryant to Finney, October 14, 1830, Finney Papers, OCL.

"The work at Buffalo," recalled Finney, "as at Auburn and Rochester, took effect very generally among the more influential classes."[51] Still fatigued, and nearly ill, Finney went to Whitestown, New York, in June for a vacation with his family at his father-in-law's home. He remained there until the late summer of 1831, when he departed for Providence.

C. Revivals in Providence and Boston

The spring of 1831 was not quite four years away from the New Lebanon Convention, yet the attitudes toward Finney's views on the church and ministry, especially after the Rochester Revival, had markedly changed. The season was at hand for his march upon Providence and Boston. Learned divines from New Haven--among them, C. A. Boardman and Leonard Bacon--had written Finney in April of 1831 apprising him of the situation. "Your views of doctrine and of measures, as Dr. P[erine] has described them, are exactly what we supposed to be your views, and they are our views with one exception," they said. "We are decidedly of opinion that here it is not advisable to try any such thing as calling on impenitent sinners to pledge themselves by standing up before the congregation." They continued, "Other things which we have tried, answer the same purpose with our people . . . . We have no doubt that when you come to see us, you will think about this just as we do."[52]

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[51] Finney, Memoirs, p. 307.

Their views on promoting a revival were not unlike Finney's, with the exception of the caveat on the "anxious bench." They emphasized: that "sinners are to be called to immediate repentance . . . in every sermon and every exhortation"; that "the goodness of God in Christ," rather than "the severe threatening style," informed their preaching; and that "The preaching of the gospel in the usual form of regular sermons, and with the usual order of devotional exercises, has been our chief reliance in the way of instrumentality."[53] They believed that "these blessed revivals are now fast putting to silence the miserable outcry against Taylorism in one quarter, and Finneyism in another."[54] D. C. Laing wrote to Finney from Utica, "You are called to Hartford. The door, seems to me to be open, for all New England." "I have always been of the opinion," he remarked, "that you do not accomplish the amount of good you might, did you stay a shorter period of time in each place." He concluded, "You had better agree to go

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[52] C. A. Boardman, Leonard Bacon (and others) to Finney, April 12, 1831, Finney Papers, OCL.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Ibid.

[to Hartford] after spending a Sabbath or two more at Buffalo. Dear Brother Finney, it does appear to me time for you to go to East-- . . . may God go with you."[55]

Not only Hartford and New Haven were calling for the ministry of Finney, Boston was calling. Many of the leading laymen were encouraging their pastors to invite Finney to Boston, but an influential group of pastors were nervous about the prospects, especially Lyman Beecher. Revivalism was a delicate issue in that Brahmin stronghold of Unitarianism, and Beecher was far from certain that Finney would not destroy the sense of evangelical unity and purpose for which he, and others, had labored. After a consultation with his cohorts, Beecher wrote to Finney about their conclusion: "That Boston was not the best point of entrance for you into New England, nor the present the best time for you to visit Boston." He continued, "It is our opinion that the time may come, and as things are now moving, may not be very distant, when we should all rejoice to see you here, but just now from the peculiarity of our condition, we are united in the opinion that the probabilities of success are not such as to ballance (sic) the risque of evil . . . should your preaching not be attended with the desired success."[56] That this decision might not be interpreted by Finney in terms of personal animosity on Beecher's part, the letter concluded with a cordial statement: "You and I are, as much perhaps evenmore, one," wrote Beecher, "than almost any two men whom God has been pleased to render conspicuous in his church. And I lament, in this day of rebuke and dissension for the truth's sake, . . . any division, or want of confidence in that great body of Evangelical men, who seem to be called by heaven to lift the standard of revivals, and to blow the trumpet of the spiritual ressurection which is coming, and is come."[57]

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[55] D. C. Laing to Finney, May 3, 1831, Finney Papers, OCL.

[56] Lyman Beecher to Finney, August 2, 1831, Finney Papers, OCL.

To this letter was appended a lengthy note by Catherine Beecher expanding the reasons her father had for warning Finney away from Boston. Foremost was this: "There is a large community here, of literary, fastidious, powerful and influential men, earnestly enlisted against revivals, and ardently on the look out for every indiscreet expression, or impolitic movement that may be trumpeted in their newspapers and blown through their ranks."[58] Also, she mentioned that the ministers "have been pruning themselves of all that is exceptionable in manner or language," in the conducting of religious services. She believed that Finney would be put "under restraint," and that the "peculiar excellencies" of his preaching

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57. Ibid.

58. Catherine Beecher to Finney, Ibid.

would serve better "in less critical circumstances" than he would find in Boston.[59] She recommended to Finney, "for your comfort, as well as your usefulness. I am decidedly of /the/ opinion that Hartford or N. Haven would be a better location for you than Boston."[60]

Finney reacted to these opinions from the Beechers with a cry that he had been misunderstood. It is clear that he had no intention of being patronized by the Beechers, however well-meaning they might be. Writing to a "Rev. and dear Brother," he let it be known that he did not wish to bring discord to New England, especially to Boston, under the circumstances:

> What confirms me in the opinion that I ought not to go is that while Dr. Beecher expressed the kindred feeling toward me he was particular to inform me that the change in his sentiment towards me was founded on a supposed resolution or reformation in my views and practices. Now it would be uncandid in me to encourage this idea and not frankly to acknowledge that in this he is mistaken, that my views in regard to doctrines and revivals of religion are not that I know of materially changed. I hope that like other men I make some advances in knowledge and gain advantage from experience, but to encourage the idea that my views of doctrine or of measures (under similar circumstances) are changed were to do wrong. I have always supposed and do now believe that Dr. Beecher has been but very imperfectly acquainted with my real views and practices, but if /he/ has understood them and has been opposed to what I really have been I have no reason to doubt but that he would feel so still.[61]

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[59] *Ibid.*

[60] *Ibid.*

[61] C. G. Finney to "Rev. and dear Brother," August 8, 1831, *Finney Papers*, OCL.

However, invitations were insistent, and very shortly, after writing the above letter from New York, Finney went to Providence to hold a "protracted meeting."[62] His stay there was brief, in 1831, but he returned for two months in 1842, leaving in time to return to Oberlin for the spring term.[63]

"The work at Providence," recalled Finney, "was of a peculiarly searching character, as it respected professors of religion."[64] There was "a great shaking among the dry bones in the different churches," as Finney preached; a deacon responded, "I do not believe there are ten real Christians in Providence."[65] In spite of the great influence of Beecher and his cohorts, the Union Church of Boston had written Finney to come and supply the pulpit, but Finney had determined not to come.[66] Writing to this supply committee, Beecher explained the new situation which had arisen. "During the last week," he began, "one of our members has been, providentially, thrown with Mr. Finney in conducting a four days meeting and the beginning of a revival, in Providence, and has had full and free communications with Mr. Finney."[67] Finney put it differently; he said that Dr. Wisner, pastor of the Old South Church, had been sent from Boston "to spy out the land and bring back a report."[68] "The results have been communicated to us," continued Beecher, "and we are happy to say that the difficulties and grounds of hesitation we felt are entirely removed. We are now, not only willing, but desirous that Mr. Finney should come, as soon as may be, to this city, and be engaged for a time in preaching the gospel and in other ways promoting a revival."[69]

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[62] Finney records in his Memoirs (p. 310) that he went to Providence in the autumn of 1831; but Beecher's letter of August 15, 1831, reported below, indicates that Finney was already in Providence.

[63] Cf. Finney, Memoirs, pp. 354-356.

[64] Ibid., p. 313.

[65] Ibid.

[66] Lyman Beecher to the Committee for Supplying the pulpit of the Union Church, August 15, 1831, Finney Papers, OCL.

Soon there were numerous requests from Congregational ministers and churches to come to Boston and labor for a revival. Lyman Beecher was at the Bowdoin Street Church, at this time, and his son, Edward, was the pastor of the Park Street Church.[70] It was there that much of Finney's preaching was accomplished in this mission. Finney was perplexed by the Christians of Boston. "I could not learn," he later reflected, "that there was among them anything like the spirit of prayer that had prevailed in the revivals at the West and in New York city. There seemed to be a peculiar type of religion there, not exhibiting that freedom and strength of faith which I had been in the habit of seeing in New York."[71] For this reason he changed his tactics: "I therefore began to preach some searching sermons to Christians."[72] For the first time in Finney's career he sounded the trumpets, and the walls did not come crashing down. He stimulated no thorough going revival, but the narrowing chasm between his "new measures" and the modes of the East was finally bridged. "The members of the orthodox churches of Boston," Finney recollected, "generally, I believe, received my views of doctrine without question. I know Dr. Beecher did; for he told me that he had never seen a man with whose theological views he so entirely accorded, as he did with mine."[73] Finney was to visit Boston several times, after this his first engagement there. In 1842, under the auspices of the pious layman, Willard Sears, he preached in Marlborough Chapel for two months.[74]

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[67] Ibid.

[68] Finney, Memoirs, p. 313.

[69] Lyman Beecher to the Committee for Supplying the pulpit of the Union Church, August 15, 1831, Finney Papers, OCL.

[70] Finney, Memoirs, p. 314; Wright, op. cit., p. 105.

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[71] Ibid.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Finney, Memoirs, pp. 316-317.

[74] Ibid., pp. 353, 355.

In 1843 he spent another winter in Boston;[75] and he returned again to preach in 1856, 1857, and 1858.[76]

In 1832 there were forces at work which were to affect directly the life and ministry of Finney. On the one hand the old call of the frontier to the West was re-presented to him in new and efficient terms. "I had much conversation with Mr. Arthur Tappan and his brother, and others in N. Y.," wrote Robert Baird from Philadelphia, "and with Mr. Elmes and others here, about your going Westward next fall. They all beg me to assure you, that just as soon as you are prepared to go to the Valley of the Mississippi, they are prepared to form an association to sustain you fully."[77] On the other hand, a second free church had been formed in New York City by a colony from Joel Parker's First Free Presbyterian Church.[78] Lewis Tappan, and some other earnest brethren, had leased the Chatham Street Theater and then implored Finney to come and labor in their midst. Finney, "a good deal exhausted" after ten years of almost unremitting evangelistic ministry, decided for New York and the Second Free Presbyterian Church. It was a more cultured Finney who left Boston in 1832 for New York and, subsequently, Oberlin.

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75. Ibid., pp. 370ff.

76. Ibid., pp. 441ff.

77. Robert Baird to Finney, February 3, 1832, Finney Papers, OCL.

78. Finney, Memoirs, p. 318.

III. FINNEY ON THE URBAN FRONTIER

A. Revivals in the City

1. The Call to the Second Free Presbyterian Church

Finney had decided to labor on the urban frontier. The revival impulse which he had previously stimulated in New York City was continuing, but Finneyites were urgently calling for his return. As early as February of 1831, while he was still at Rochester, Finney received a plea from Lewis Tappan:

> Can you come here and help in the good work now going on in the churches. Meetings have been held for five days successively, last week, and have recommenced this week favorably. The church is filled, and the lecture room is pretty well filled with enquirers. Mr. Norton and Mr. Parker seem to understand what to do, and so may some others, but it would seem that more revival ministers are wanted--greatly needed. I have no doubt the people would hear you gladly, and probably the ministers also, after a day or two. Will you come then?[1]

To this Joel Parker added a hasty note: "Don't refuse to come you may probably do more here this winter if you come in the power and spirit of the Lord than you have done in all your life."[2] As the revival gathered momentum, it swept opposition aside and encouraged further efforts. Tappan was concerned to unite the evangelical ministers about the preaching of Finney--he discussed this strategy with Parker:

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[1] Lewis Tappan to Finney, February 2, 1831, Finney Papers, OCL.

[2] Ibid.

> God appears to have been preparing the way for Mr. F[inney] to come again to this city. He has revived christians somewhat, and taught them to use means of which they were shy. Those who went to hear Mr. F. when he was here gladly, but concealed their feelings, would now speak out; and those who spoke against him would now go to hear him. The religious feelings of the churches have set in favor of such preaching, and ministers if they would, cannot now stop the swelling tide.
>
> We have secured Masonic Hall until 1st May, and Tammany Hall after that period indefinitely. Either can be arranged to seat as many as any Pres. ch. in the city. Let Mr. F. come then, and join with you. His experience will benefit you, and both together can preach every night in the week, and rally around you a corps of lay brethren who will follow up the impression produced by the public services.
>
> It is possible that Mr. F.'s coming here may unite him and Mr. Nettleton--and rally around them all the evangelical ministers in the city. It is certain, I think, that Mr. F. and you alone, with God's blessing upon your humble, bold and persevering labors, would fill the Hall, fill enquiry meetings, and be instrumental in converting many hundreds if not thousands.
>
> I think it is clear as day light that an opportunity is presented--such as he never had before--for Mr. F. to come here. And the sooner he comes the Better.[3]

These discussions were taking place while Finney's success at Rochester was being heralded to the public; yet, many of his friends in New York were more cautious than Lewis

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[3] Lewis Tappan to Joel Parker, February 21, 1831, Finney Papers, OCL.

Tappan, fearing that they might disrupt the uneasy sense of unity developed in the revival by a public call for Finney's ministry. Parker sent Tappan's letter, which he had received, to Finney with his own letter, explaining his view of the situation.

> The success which God has given you at Rochester has reacted upon this city with tremendous power. Brethren are tremblingly alive to every danger of division--union is the leading characteristick of the work and it is becoming stronger as the work deepens. Ludlow says that Bro. Nettleton himself will know how to confess his faults if you come. . . .
>
> As thus Tappan said in a publick meeting of ministers and elders that he presumed Mr. Finney might be induced to come here if he were sent for. Your friends did not think it prudent to urge it then and the subject passed off among other suggestions in the same speech.[4]

It is clear, however, that the situation in New York was moving slowly toward an acceptance of Finney and his measures. Nettleton was in New York, but his style of preaching was not reaching the people. Herman Norton wrote to Finney about the revival and commented upon his meeting with Nettleton:

> The state of things is very different here--there revivals are going on powerfully--here there is a general excitement but not a powerful work--there ministers have been united--here not. . . . Ministers in N. Y. are apparently more united than they ever have been. Time must decide whether this union is founded in humility and repentance. . . . Another thing Brother N as you know is here. I have had an interview with him today.

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[4] Joel Parker to Finney, February 22, 1831, Finney Papers, OCL.

> . . . He appears very pleasant thanked me for calling. Said not a word about old matters. . . . I have heard a number speak of his preaching as far as I am acquainted Christians are disappointed--say that he does not come up to the mark of revivals.[5]

After a few weeks, the revival in New York began to lose its momentum. According to one report, the revival seemed to be "nearly at a stand, if not retrograding."[6] The writer expressed his desire that Finney come "immediately": "They now see the importance of some more powerful means"; he wrote, "and many of the prejudices against 'new measures,' have passed away."[7] Tappan was becoming impatient, having not heard from Finney, who was immersed in his revival efforts at Rochester. "The facts are these": he confided, "the Ministers generally prefer you should not come, but many influential laymen, in all their churches, are decidedly in favor of you coming; and, were you here their ministers would not oppose you. I think you may rely upon the accuracy of this statement." He concluded, "I do not think a powerful revival will take place here unless you do come. We are to rely upon God, it is true, and never for a moment to forget his power, and our own weakness; but God honors instruments and chooses

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5. H. Norton to Finney, February 21, 1831, Finney Papers, OCL.

6. O. Smith to Finney, March 16, 1831, Finney Papers, OCL.

7. Ibid.

spiritual weapons. The ministers here do not use the necessary means, and will not. Why not then come, and come at once?"[8]

Tappan's enthusiasm and concern for the revival was unbounded, but others saw more clearly the nature and extent of the opposition of the ministers to Finney and his measures. H. G. Ludlow wrote to Finney his view of the situation in terms that had the ring of truth.

> I write to you with an aching heart. The subject of your visit to our city at this time is agitating the minds of our three Presbyteries and I feel it my duty to communicate to you the state of feeling which exists towards you among the Brethren of the Ministry. You have doubtless heard of the wonderful union and delightful harmony of which for the last two months has prevailed among them. Difficulties of long standing have been reconciled and brotherly love beyond anything ever before witnessed animates the body of Christ. They move together in their counsels and efforts. The result has been very happy upon the ungodly, and a work of grace has been progressing unequalled in the . . . history of this city. This to my dear Br. I know is delightful intelligence. But my Br. within the last fortnight the question of your intended visit to us has prodigiously agitated us and saving Brs. Norton, Parker and myself they have unanimously agreed that your coming would be highly inexpedient. Indeed my Br. so full are they in this opinion that you will not be invited to preach in their pulpits. This matter has been discussed at three different meetings of the Brethren. The reasons they urge are principally of two kinds. A number of them are conscientiously opposed to it. They entertain the full conviction that there is something wrong about the Man and his Measures, and although under ordinary circumstances they might perhaps invite you to preach for them

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[8] Lewis Tappan to Finney, March 17, 1831, Finney Papers, OCL.

> once they would not feel safe in introducing you as a fellow laborer to their charges. Others say Expediency requires that nothing should be introduced now to divert attention, and excite unhappy divisions among the Brethren in the Ministry and the Church. There are many in all the churches who love Br. F. and will go to hear him and be displeased and disatisfied with their minister for not inviting him. Now why when this harmony prevails introduce this source of contention. The evil of his coming will probably be far greater than the good. God who has thus far marvelously carried on his work without him can do it still. . . . I neither fear Br. F. nor his measures, for I believe God has put his own imprimateur upon them. But it seems to me my Br. that the time an useful and happy visit to this city has not yet come.[9]

By April, Tappan still wanted Finney to come, and he revealed his feelings concerning the stalling tactics of the ministers. "Were you here, and acquainted with the pros and cons"--he wrote--"I think you would be satisfied that no evil, but much good, would result from resuming your labors in this city. . . . It is the pride of heart of some of the ministers that prevents them from inviting you here. Many persons wish, and say, they should rejoice if you were here, although they cannot lift a finger to bring you."[10] Nevertheless, he now granted that Finney might not wish to hold revival meetings in New York at that time, but without yielding on the point of the significance of a revival in that great city. He wrote concerning a proposed meeting in New York:

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[9] H. G. Ludlow to Finney, March 16, 1831, Finney Papers, OCL.

[10] Lewis Tappan to Finney, April 3, 1831, Finney Papers, OCL.

> On your arrival, and after conferring with your brethren, if it is thought inexpedient for you to remain here, pass on to New Haven or Boston, where you will be welcome. Depend upon it a blow must be struck in this city, heavier than anything we have had yet, or the revival will linger, and finally go out. And if this city shall be visited by an outpouring of the Holy Spirit oh, what an impulse will be given to this land![11]

Finney did not go to New York at this time; from Rochester he went, as we have seen, to Buffalo and on to Providence and Boston.

Toward the end of January, in the new year, the situation seemed to be changing again in favor of Finney's coming to New York. Herman Norton wrote to Finney with his view of the new situation:

> Now my Dear Sir, I do hope you will feel that the objections heretofor existing are in a good degree removed and that you may find it to be your duty to come. I ought to have said that the objections against new measures are fast giving way . . . and I believe the imprudent conduct of Doct. Cox has done much to bring about this entire change of feeling. Doct. Cox during the late protracted meeting at Broome Street Church, took occasion in his Sermon to shew his disapprobation of new measures and the following evening lectured in his own session room against them, calling them ultra measures, full of animal feeling, fanatical, etc.[12]

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[11] Ibid.

[12] Herman Norton to Finney, January 27, 1832, Finney Papers, OCL.

Overturning Cox's objections, new measures were utilized and the revival began to gather force. Lewis Tappan once again became enthusiastic about the prospects and began negotiations to purchase the Chatham Street Theater for use as a church. During March and April there was a steady stream of correspondence with Finney, encouraging him to come as pastor of the new church to be established there. Tappan thought that the theater turned into a church was a splendid idea. It would be both economical and sensational, thus creating interest among the people. "For one," wrote Tappan, "I am decidedly opposed to putting the funds of the church into expensive edifices. We must continue, in this age, to build spiritual temples and make no heavy investments in brick and mortar." To this Finney responded with a question which revealed a slightly more conservative and churchly point of view: "Can the place be made decent inside and out for the worship of God?" Tappan answered: "This theater can be made as suitable for public worship as Masonic Hall. The sensation that will be produced by converting the place, with slight alterations, into a church will be very great; and curiosity will be excited, in the city and out of it, to visit a place thus appointed. I would preserve the form of a theater as much as possible."[13]

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[13] Lewis Tappan to Finney, March 16, 1832, Tappan Papers, Library of Congress.

Later in March, Finney received word that the plan for the theater was leaping ahead. A music society had offered one thousand dollars a year for the use of the theater on evenings not planned for religious services; and there was an agreement to lease the building for "sacred instrumental music," "moral meetings," and the like. Further, it seemed useful to reserve a week each year for a "protracted meeting" and to make plans to use it for the anniversary meetings of the benevolent societies in May.[14]

Finney asked some provocative questions about the type of people likely to be reached by a church in that place. Tappan replied, "Decent people will go there permanently without any doubt--that is as decent people as Mr. Parker's congregation--but not such Christians as some of the fastidious deacons etc. of Boston, who think there must be 'pomp and circumstance' connected with a church, and nothing out of the way to offend the polite, formal, etc."[15] Finney was rising to the bait and earnest conversations were introduced into the negotiations for the theater, with surprising results. Tappan continued, in his letter to Finney:

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[14] Lewis Tappan to Finney, March 22, 1832, Tappan Papers, Library of Congress.

[15] Ibid.

> We have had much labour and pains taken in carrying on the negotiation. Rev. Dr. Janeway (representing the proprietors on the one hand) and the Managers of the Theater on the other. We made Janeway feel ashamed of having such a property and he felt a desire to be rid of it. We talked to the lessee (Blanchard, the great Circus man) until he wept, and said he would aid us in converting the place into a church. He seemed to be under conviction of the Holy Spirit.[16]

To Finney's questions about the renovation of the building, Tappan replied that the converted theater would seat over 2500, and that the pulpit would be put upon the stage with a large window behind it. The seats would begin at the orchestra and "rise gradually over the pit so that the first tier of boxes would be a continuation of seats." Further, it was agreed that Finney might continue his itinerant preaching for two months during the hot summer weather in the city.[17]

While Finney was still in Boston, word of the final negotiations reached him. Tappan was well-pleased:

> Well, we have possession! Hamden gave it without compensation; our contracts are made; a gang of mechanics began this morning; and the place is to be finished by 8 May!! -- in season for the anniversaries. After that a brick wall next to Pearl Street is to be put up, and the Hall (shall we call it _Chatham Hall_?) is to be ready for preaching 1st July. . . .[18]

After some debate, it was decided to call the converted theater the Chatham Street Chapel.[19] The Chapel was being prepared, and the congregation was already organized. Joel Parker had written to Finney, "Our new church is organized with 41 members. Masonic Hall waits for us but we don't want to go in to it without a proper labourer."[20] The urban frontier awaited the ministry of Charles G. Finney--"New York," wrote Parker, "is better adapted to you than Boston--there never was another such excitable mass--such a perfect 'mobile vulgus' as this population."[21] Finney left Boston in May of 1832 to assume the charge of the Second Free Presbyterian Church located in the Chatham Street Chapel.[22]

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[16] _Ibid_.

[17] _Ibid_.

[18] Lewis Tappan to Finney, April 11, 1832, _Tappan Papers_, Library of Congress.

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[19] Lewis Tappan to Finney, April 19, 1832, Tappan Papers, Library of Congress.

[20] Joel Parker to Finney, February 15, 1832, Finney Papers, OCL.

[21] Ibid.

[22] On June 1, 1832, the session of the church sent the following call to Finney: "The Second Free Presbyterian Church of New York being on sufficient grounds, well satisfied of the ministerial qualifications of you Charles G. Finney, and having good hopes from our past experience of your labours, that your ministrations in the gospel will be profitable to our spiritual interests, do earnestly call and desire you, to undertake the pastoral office in said church; promising you in the discharge of your duty, all proper support, encouragement, and obedience in the Lord. And that you may be free from worldly cares and avocations, we hereby promise and oblige ourselves to pay to you the sum of fifteen hundred Dollars, in regular quarterly payments. . . . " Joel Parker, moderator; J. W. G. Bliss and Wm. Green, Jr., commission; June 1, 1832, Finney Papers, OCL.

Having accepted the call, arrangements were made for a place to live, and furniture. Lewis Tappan, as usual, played a large role in this enterprise, and he did not miss the opportunity to send along some gratuitous advice with his, and Green's generous offer. He informed Finney:

> Mr. Green and myself will be responsible to the amount of seven hundred dollars for furniture for your house. I advise to your making a list of articles wanted. . . . This list can be cut down if need be until the above sum is reached.
>
> . . . .
>
> If I were to ever commence housekeeping I think my house should be furnished very differently from what it is. I would have nothing but what is necessary in an enlightened sense of the term. The principle that regulates the dress of a christian should govern about furnishing a house. It is a daily trouble to me that my furniture is not such as becomes one professing godliness. And it is difficult to make it so after a house is filled with trumpery and a family have got used to it. I should have a civil war in my house if I were now to go through and clean it of superfluous furniture, and yet my wife is a tolerably reasonable woman.
>
> The only safe way is to begin plain, very plain; have things absolutely necessary; and as necessities increase, or are ascertained, buy more. Our minister should set an example worthy of imitation in this day. Don't be afraid of meanness. If a man has a hospitable heart, his guest don't mind a pine table or rag carpet.[23]

Such a view of the church and ministry was imbedded in the culture of 19th century America, and it persisted in evangelical circles to the middle of the 20th century--it had the virtue of necessity.

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[23] Lewis Tappan to Finney, June 28, 1832, Tappan Papers, Library of Congress.

2. Opposition to the Call

The whole of Finney's ministry to this time had been that of an itinerant evangelist. The decision to become a settled pastor of an urban congregation was not one with which all Finneyites agreed. For instance, Luther Myrick wanted Finney to remain an itinerant, and Theodore Weld voiced the opinion that he was not "designed" for any city. "You mentioned of going to New York or Philadelphia, of being established," wrote Myrick:

> Dear Bro., I have no objection to your going to either of those places to return for a season. But for Jesus Christ's sake don't take the charge of any particular church. Pardon me for my freedom, Bro. F. I love you God knows, but I love God's cause more. You can do much more good to itinerate, I think. If my prayers will prevent you settling, you shall not settle.[24]

Myrick was something of a rough-hided maverick among the itinerant evangelists of the Oneida revivals, whose friendship posed a problem for Finney. Brought under the scrutiny of Oneida Presbytery for his extreme measures and doctrine, he managed always to associate himself with Finney. "The important part of the matter is this," confided Theodore Spencer, "amongst all his friends and supporters, wild as well as tame, you are identified with him. Those bretheren (sic), whose antinomian scheme you have for years been opposing, are doubtless also inclined to identify you, and all the rest with him and his errors, and lump all together under the tittle (sic) of 'new measure men.'"[25] Finney suffered much from the assumed association of such men as Myrick, and Spencer put the strategic question directly to him. "The question is," he wrote, "must you remain thus connected with him? You say, you never connected yourself with him--true, but he has tied himself to you. . . ."[26] Taking Myrick on his own terms, we must assume that it was his manner rather than his doctrine that disassociated him from the Finney camp. His *apologia* to Finney points to this conclusion:

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[24] Luther Myrick to Finney, January 30, 1832, *Finney Papers*, OCL.

> You have probably heard that I am complained of before Oneida presbytery by the old school Ministers for *Schism*, *Heresy*, and publick lying in the papers. There is a combination formed between some of Oneida Ministers . . . with some laymen to put down *Myrickism* as they call it. . . . The heresy is that I have taught that there is no such thing as *inherent depravity*--Sin does not consist in a *want of conformity to God's law*--That no one is a sinner till *he understands law, and voluntarily transgresses*--That *God does not desire the*--

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[25] T. Spencer to Finney, August 21, 1833, *Finney Papers*, OCL.

[26] *Ibid.*

> *misery of any of his creatures*--That *all the Holy Ghost does in conversion is to convince the conscience*-- Awful heresy.[27]

It was easy enough for Finney to turn aside from the protestations of Luther Myrick, but it was not easy to withstand the opposition of Theodore Weld. Weld had steadfastly tried to steer Finney away from the big cities, and to keep him in the frontier orbit of the West. As it became known that Finney was giving serious consideration to becoming a settled pastor in New York, Weld presented Finney, in his usual bombastic style, with a plea for the West; he wanted him to come to Cincinnati to save the great valley in its portentous infancy. Tappan was pulling on the line which indicated the vast significance of the urban frontier; Weld was hauling on the line which would bring Finney to the western frontier. Writing to Finney at Boston, from Cincinnati, Weld argued:

> You never can move this vast valley by working the lever in Boston, New York or Philadelphia. But I suppose you will still reiterate the old assertion that in *New York* especially you can sway the West thro the hundreds of business men who resort thither from here. Answer: the western merchants and others are but the drop of the bucket in this great population. Besides, if Christians, while in New York their heads and hearts are stuffed with everything but religion. They are whirling in all the hustle and bustle and chaffering and purchasing, confused and perplexed with the details and statistics of filthy lucre, in the unfitest mood for receiving a healthful moral influence. If not

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[27] Luther Myrick to Finney, January 10, 1833, *Finney Papers*, OCL.

> christian, *ten to one if they go to hear you*--if they do--it is not often that impenitent men, especially when distracted more than at any other time in the year with engrossing cares and perplexities, fall in love with you at first sight. I have seen in this country perhaps a score of christians and many others who have heard you preach, some once, some twice at the least, but have *not found one who has been Finneyized*. I tell you my dear brother, the cure, the only cure for prejudice against you is contact. . . . You must pitch your tent among a people if you would effectually unloose their prejudices and sway them to any extent. *Look over your whole history*, and if it teaches *any lesson* on every page and in every line it is the importance of grappling a community and *pressing them close to you*. *You know* you have accomplished just nothing at all at arms end, and *most especially nothing* with a rod pole. I feel on this subject more than I can tell you. The mere *fact of your* coming into the valley would win this population greatly. They would begin to *identify you with themselves*. The obstacles here are very few. You could command audiences of thousands. . . . You ought to be here *certainly by* May, when the Campaign of Camp meetings opens. One fact more. The great mass of the population are *not gospel hardened*. . . . They have never heard any preaching like yours. The best presbyterian Revival Preachers here preach nothing but the loose disconnected rhapsodies of Methodists in the main. Their preaching is exhortation and appeal, dwelling upon the love of Christ, etc., and all addressed to mere sympathy. They reason little and investigate less. One fact more. The Churches at the East are comparatively well under weigh. They are moving upon the full tide of revivals. They dont (sic) need you at all as they do here. Thro out the West, revivals of any power are almost unknown. This whole region is half a century behind the East. Besides, here is to be the battle field of the world. Here Satans seat is. A mighty effort must be made to dislodge him *soon*, or the West is undone.[28]

Finney was unsettled by Weld's plea for the West and gave serious thought to Cincinnati. Tappan, with determined zeal, gave voice to the demands of the urban frontier. On March 16, 1832, he wrote to Finney:

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[28] Theodore Weld to Finney, February 28, 1832, *Finney Papers*, OCL.

> Weld had not heard of our plan here. If he had I feel sure he would have said by all means go to New York. I know his views on this subject. They correspond nearly with what you have hitherto expressed. This city must be converted or the nation is lost. Do what may be done elsewhere, and leave this city the headquarters of Satan, and the nation is not saved. It is truly wonderful what influence New York has throughout the country. The south, and especially the west, look to this city, for moral impulses. . . . A blow struck here reverberates to the extremities of the republic. Still candour (sic) requires of me to state that it is Weld's opinion that God has not designed you for any city.[29]

Finney wrote Tappan a letter on the 20th March expressing his uncertainty, and Tappan quickly responded:

> With regard to Mr. Weld's arguments, he knows but little of New York from experience, and his advice to you is exactly contrary to his own practice. He wanted to go to the West, as Agent to the Manual Labor Society, and was very anxious to receive the appointment here as it would give him influence, etc., at the West. . . . Why is it that measures adopted here thrill the nation? Because of the mighty power of a multitudenous city, and of the error mankind always make in looking with awe upon physical power as if it had the attribute of moral force.
>
> Again, a man like Weld thinks the center of the world is where he acts. It is too much the case with us all. The Valley is important, and very soon Rail roads will bring all the business men to this city twice a year. If converted here they will labor at home effectually. . . .

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[29] Lewis Tappan to Finney, March 16, 1832, Tappan Papers, Library of Congress.

> Your previous reasoning about the danger of too many men abandoning the east, was conclusive to my mind. I have seen nothing on the opposite side that refutes it. . . . Faithful preaching here and a revival of religion, will affect the nation; and blows struck here will resound to the rocky mountains and re-echo.[30]

3. A Pastor in New York City

From 1824 to 1832 Finney had been an itinerant evangelist of extraordinary power. In the late spring of 1832 he came again to New York City to become the pastor of the Second Free Presbyterian Church. The Chatham Street Chapel was dedicated on April 23rd, 1832, and almost immediately his revival preaching attracted large congregations. In spite of the cholera epidemic, which raged through the city during the summer, the revival services were continued and many converts were won. The work reached such proportions that Finney invited a number of his up-state colleagues to come and support the revival: there were the ministers, Joel Parker, Herman Norton, Dirck C. Lansing, and John Ingersoll, the father of the noted agnostic. Of special significance was the importation of Thomas Hastings from Utica to take charge of the church music. There are few data on Hastings' work in New York, but he seems to have directed the music at the Chatham

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[30] Lewis Tappan to Finney, March 22, 1832, Tappan Papers, Library of Congress; also in Finney Papers, OCL.

Street Chapel and supervised the music at some dozen other churches.[31]

Finney had spent himself in the Rochester Revival, and his continued itinerancy had left him in a fatigued and weakened condition. In the latter part of the summer he was forced to retire to the country for a rest; and upon his return was regularly installed as pastor of the church, September 28, 1832.[32] At his installation service he was taken ill with the cholera and was unable to continue his preaching for some time. In July of 1833 Finney was still unable to be at the church, but the work went on. Lewis Tappan reported to him that the weekly prayer meetings were well attended, that the Friday evening lectures and the Sunday School program were progressing with interest; but that attendance at the chapel for the Sabbath services, particularly the evening service, was falling off--"but this can't be helped," he added, "while you are absent."[33]

Finally, in the winter of 1833-34, he was persuaded by his friends to take a Mediterranian cruise, hoping that this would bring back his health and strength. His voyage to Smyrna, to Malta, and to Sicily brought him little succour and no pleasure.[34] He spent a great deal of his time in prayer and reflection; asking questions about the permanent value of his work, pondering the fact that many Christians lost their enthusiasm for the Christian faith after revivals had cooled. His mind had been turned toward the lack of vigor in the lives of professing Christians during his preaching in Boston; and, as a pastor in New York, he began to see more clearly the problems of everyday Christian living. During the long weeks of his voyage, from January 20th to July 18th, 1834, he pondered these things. In the near future, Finney's thought showed a shift away from revivalism aimed at gaining new converts to revivalism aimed at the sanctification of Christians. This prepared the way for his *Sermons on Important Subjects* (1836), and the *Lectures to Professing Christians* (1837).

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[31] Cf. Charles Hastings to Finney, September 24, 1832, and Lewis Tappan to Finney, August 17, 1832, Finney Papers, OCL; also, P. H. Fowler, op. cit., pp. 696-705.

[32] Cf. Finney, Memoirs, p. 321; Lewis Tappan, "History of the Free Churches in the City of New York," (Feb. 1, 1835), Andrew Reed and James Matheson, A Narrative of the Visit to the American Churches by the Deputation from the Congregational Union of England and Wales (New York, 1835), II, 773.

[33] Lewis Tappan to Finney, July 10, 1833, Finney Papers, OCL.

In the autumn of 1834 he returned to his pastoral labors at Chatham Street Chapel, but his health was worse rather than better. He consented to sit for his portrait "on condition that Br. Green shall give it to my family in case I should be taken away."[35] It was in these circumstances that

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[34] Cf. Finney, *Memoirs*, p. 325.

[35] Finney to Mrs. Finney, November 10 and 24, 1834, *Finney Papers*, OCL.

Finney had to face the threatening storm of the antislavery dispute. The New York Anti-Slavery Society had been established at the Chatham Street Chapel on October 2nd, 1833, and the Free Presbyterian Churches became the centers of antislavery activities. In November of 1834 Finney had persuaded his church to refuse admission to communion of known slaveholders. There were riots, and the lives of prominent antislavery men, like Arthur and Lewis Tappan, were threatened. Joshua Leavitt, the editor of the New York Evangelist, wrote to Finney:

> Brother Finney, I have ruined the Evangelist, I have not been prudent as you cautioned me to be, and I have gone so far ahead of public intelligence and feeling on the subject, that my subscription list is rapidly failing; and we shall not be able to continue its publication beyond the first of January, unless you can do something to bring the paper back to public favor again.[36]

Finney responded that his health was such that he did not know what he could do, but he promised to make it a subject of prayer. Leavitt suggested that he might write a series of articles on revivals, which he was confident would immediately restore the paper to public favor. After consideration, Finney proposed to preach a course of lectures to the congregation of the Chatham Street Chapel on revivals of religion, which might be reported in the paper. Leavitt immediately took up the idea and advertised the lectures in the very next number. "This had the effect he desired," wrote Finney, "and he soon told me that the subscription list was very rapidly increasing."[37] The first of twenty-two Friday night lectures on "Revivals of Religion" was published in the New York Evangelist on December 6, 1834.

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[36] Finney, Memoirs, p. 329.

Finney's decision to minister on the urban frontier was a sign of a trend, the realization of the growing importance of the emerging cities. The church was an important part of rural America, with its small villages and towns. It provided opportunities for social recreation as well as being the center of the spiritual and, to a degree, intellectual life of the community. In the 1820's the farmer differed only slightly in his outlook from the artisan and the merchant in the city. Foreign travelers in America frequently noted the underlying agreement on moral codes and standards of conduct which they observed in the agrarian and the urban scenes. As long as the spirit of the city was essentially that of the country village, the development of a distinctive urbanism was retarded.[38] However, this pattern was changing in the 1830's and the rate of change was accelerating toward the end of the century. Improved modes of transportation and communication brought a centralization of the mercantile interests to the large cities. Industrial and manufacturing enterprises rapidly expanded to meet the demands of a growing population. An increase of immigration from the countryside and foreign shores began to flood the cities; a cleavage between the urban and agrarian cultures was developing.

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[37] Ibid.

[38] John A. Krout, and Dixon Ryan Fox, The Completion of Independence, 1790-1830 (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1944), p. 401.

The evangelicals had been tardy in realizing the growing challenge which the metropolis presented to the forces of revivalism, and this must be considered an index of the agrarian nature of the segment of society in which they flourished. Perry Miller rightly asserts that the mind of America "was everywhere slow, or deliberately reluctant, to admit the fact of urbanization."[39] By 1850, the significance of the city for the Christian enterprise was a recurring theme. "If the country needs Christianity," wrote James A. Thome in The Oberlin Evangelist, "the city needs it vastly more." He continued:

> In proportion to the denseness of the population, the points of contact and collision, and the facilities for money-making and spending, will be the temptation to selfishness, to sensuality and vice, and consequently there must be a greater demand for the reigning presence of Christianity--the only power adequate to arrest the festering tendencies of the human mass.[40]

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[39] Perry Miller, The Life of the Mind in America (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1965), p. 87.

[40] J. A. Thome, "Sketches of Western Villages and Cities," The Oberlin Evangelist, Vol. XII, No. 14 (July 3, 1850), 106.

To repeat, that Finney went to the urban frontier of New York was a sign of the realization of the growing significance of that metropolis; that he left his pastorate there after so short a time was a portend of the inability of evangelical revivalism to cope with the problems of the church and ministry in the great cities. "The Christianity of our Cities may be described in a single sentence"--wrote James Thome--"it is the Handmaid of Secularity. Occupying such a position, Christianity can confer no blessing on the city, and derive none from it. . . ." He went on to say:

> This is a subject which demands the earnest and immediate attention of the Christian public. Christianity in the city! What is it? What should it be? How shall it become what it should be? We scarcely know of a subject of more vital interest, or more pressing emergency than this. Yet who is devoting attention to it?[41]

The short-lived attempt of the evangelical revivalists to meet the challenge of the urban frontier was centered in the Free Church movement during the decade of 1830-40.

B. The Free Presbyterian Church Movement

1. The Rise of the "Free" Churches

The Free Church movement of the 1830's was an attempt to democratize the churches and provide a ministry for the disinherited on the urban frontier. Protestant church membership in the cities was constituted largely by the middle and upper classes, hence this movement marked the emergence of a new sense of egalitarianism in American social and economic thought. At the forefront of this movement was the evangelical phalanx which came into being as a result of the Finney revivals in Rochester. It was closely allied, then, to the "New School" ferment in the Presbyterian Church associated with Finney.[42]

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[41] *Ibid.*

The class structure of the churches was organized about the practice of pew rentals, which meant that the wealthiest members of any one church had their choice of pews. Indeed, the position of the family pew would be a ready index of social and econmic rank. It was the setting aside of this undemocratic agency of pew ownership which gave the movement its name, the free referring to an open pew system of church seating. The custom of pew rentals, when relied upon as the chief means of revenue for the upkeep of the church and ministry, meant that pew-holders tended to have a great deal to say about the program of the church and vested interests tended to emerge with the chief laymen as the primary architects of local church policy. As Cole aptly states, "The churches surrendered to 'big business' long before manufacturing and government."[43] The most serious result of this practice, however, was the tendency toward exclusiveness which marked the urban Protestant churches--especially the Presbyterian, Congregational, and Episcopal congregations. Low income families were embarrassed by this custom and became estranged from the churches, suffering the loss of the benefits of the preaching of the gospel, of worship, and the other spiritual and social benefits of church membership. Finneyites felt this deprivation keenly and wished to make the church a classless institution without regard for economic, social, or racial distinctions.

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[42] Cf. Charles C. Cole, Jr., "The Free Church Movement in New York City," New York History, Volume XXXIV, No. 3 (July, 1953), 284-297.

Cole points out, in his study of the free church movement, that there had been sporadic attempts to do something about this abuse in the church, but with little effect. He reports that the South had been agitated by this issue, and the 1820 General Conference of the Methodist Church at Baltimore adopted a ruling that all new Methodist churches should be built with free pews. The ruling was made advisory rather than mandatory, with the result that in 1850 attempts were still being made to change the practice.[44] It was the introduction of a voluntary system of financial support by the free church movement that finally broke through the traditional system.

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[43] Ibid., p. 286.

[44] Ibid., p. 287.

The Free Presbyterian churches had as their chief concern the preaching of the gospel to the poor, and less advantaged social classes, in a church situation freed from the vested interests and power of the pew-holders. The evangelical assumption upon which the movement operated was that Christianity must be open to all. Among the established urban Presbyterian churches, such a view was an innovation that required new insights and motivation to set aside old religious prejudices and practices.

In May of 1830 two individuals, one a member of the Dutch Reformed Church and the other a Presbyterian, who had "frequently mourned together over the desolations of Zion," met with three or four Christian friends to discuss the possibility of founding a new church.[45] The Reverend Joel Parker

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[45] Lewis Tappan, "History of the Free Churches in the City of New York," in Reed and Matheson, op. cit., II, p. 772. This is the best contemporary history of the movement by one of the chief supporters and architects of the scheme. The following narrative is based mainly upon Tappan's account. It may be said that this movement represented, to a large degree, the enthusiasm of Lewis Tappan as a new convert to Trinitarian Christianity from Unitarianism. In his Journal (Lewis Tappan Papers, Library of Congress) one can trace his religious pilgrimage from his notification to the Secretary of the

/Unitarian

of Rochester was in New York at the time and was invited to the meeting. The opinions expressed at that meeting centered upon the almost total exclusion of the poor from the Presbyterian and Dutch Churches and the great neglect of the careless and impenitent on the part of professing Christians. They agreed that what was needed was a new church that would take prompt measures in a ministry to these people that they might be converted. Further, they pledged to guarantee a sufficient sum of money to defray the expenses of public worship, and engaged Parker to be the minister on the condition that his congregation and presbytery would consent to his dismission to accept the new call. The new congregation commenced its existence under the pastoral charge of Parker on June 27, 1830, in a room formerly used as a lecture room by the Reverend John B. Romeyn on Thames Street. It was a modest beginning, the congregation originally consisting of only three families. The room was quickly renovated to accommodate about 350 persons at an expense of about 125 dollars; and,

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Unitarian Association, November 19, 1827 (p. 127), that he no longer considered himself a member of the Unitarian denomination to the entry in his Diary for October 9, 1829 (p. 87), in which he notes that he and his wife had made a public profession of their faith in the Cedar Street Church. "We consider that our former profession, when we joined Dr. Channing's church in Boston, should go for nothing," he wrote, "and we made a profession de novo."

simultaneously, public notice in the newspapers and on placards posted in the streets was given of the new place of public worship. The congregation gradually increased to nearly 400 persons, and a large Sabbath School was organized. From the very beginning there were conversions and hopeful awakenings.

The American Home Missionary Society had thought it prudent not to take the infant congregation under its charge, so application was made to the First Presbytery of New York to organize the church under the name of the First Free Church of New York. The presbytery objected to the name and expressed a sentiment that no new church was needed in the lower part of the city. However, the matter was pressed and finally a commission was appointed to organize the church. Tappan reported that "this solemnity, together with the ordination of two elders, took place on the 22d September, 1830."[46] The legally constituted congregation consisted of sixteen members, seven males and nine females. This congregation had communion on the first Sabbath in each month, and received new members at every sacramental occasion. An active program of visitation was initiated in the vicinity of the church to ascertain the number of young people not attending any Sabbath school. Neighborhood prayer meetings were held; two of them in rooms over grocery stores which thereafter declined to stay open for the sale of "liquors" on Sunday. On February 20, 1831, the congregation moved to temporary quarters in the Masonic Hall, Broadway, where larger accommodations were available. This was the largest and most central hall in the city, and the services were usually filled to capacity.

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[46] Lewis Tappan, op. cit., p. 773.

The amazing success of this First Free Presbyterian Church during the first year of its existence sustained the enthusiasm of its proponents. The urgency of "immediate conversion" was felt throughout the various departments of the church. Tappan described the zeal for conversion:

> The minister, elders, teachers in the Bible classes and Sabbath school, and, in fact, every member of the church, considered it their duty to labor personally and unitedly for the *immediate* conversion of sinners. They believed it to be sinful, and leading people to perdition, to tell them to "wait God's time," or to tell them to "go home and repent"; and therefore inculcated that God required sinners to repent NOW. The teachers in the Sabbath school felt that they could not continue to teach unless some of their scholars were converted every Lord's day. The consequence was, conversions took place continually, and the school and Bible classes were made truly the nursery of the church.[47]

No attempt will be made here to analyze the psychological implications of such an urgent program for the conversion of children, for adequate data are not available for this exact social situation. However, it is doubtless permissible to point out that this heightened emphasis upon conversion by means of an emotional experience and stylized pronouncements, especially among the young, led quite properly to the kind of critique we find in Horace Bushnell's classic, *Christian Nurture*.

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[47] *Ibid.*

It is clear that such a congregation as this did not have the means to purchase property in the lower part of the city where real estate was extravagantly high, nor did they have the means to build a house for public worship. The novel plan was devised to purchase, at auction, four substantial brick stores occupied by grocers at the corner of Dey and Washington Streets. The upper rooms were converted into a hall for public worship and the ground floor was let at a sufficient price to pay the interest on the loan of the purchase fund. The renovation cost about 7,000 dollars which was raised by subscription, chiefly among the congregation. The congregation voted to have all pews free, hence they dispensed with pew doors and other signs of the pew rental system. Tappan believed that the new scheme had demonstrated its merits:

> Experience had shown that the system of free churches, if judiciously planned and properly sustained, was the means, under God, of drawing in large numbers of persons who are too often excluded from houses of public worship, in consequence of the pews being owned or occupied by those who make no direct efforts to accommodate persons in humble life, or those who need to be urged to attend public worship.[48]

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[48] *Ibid.*, p. 774.

The new church could accommodate the seating of almost 1,000 persons and carried on its active program for the conversion of sinners. The temperance movement had been superimposed upon evangelical revivalism so that conversion carried with it the understanding that total abstinence was a part of the Christian commitment. Tappan made it a point to indicate that the church lost several hundreds of dollars each year by refusing to rent its premises to those tenants who "trafficked in ardent spirits." Several individuals in the neighborhood renounced the business of selling "distilled damnation" by the cask and quart; and two of them became elders of the church.

The congregation assembled in its renovated hall on October 16, 1831. A protracted meeting was undertaken and so many accessions were received that almost immediately after the opening of the church to public worship it was decided to begin a second free church without delay.[49] "Accordingly, on the 14th of February, 1832," Tappan reports, "three of the elders, together with thirty-six other members, were organized into a church, under the title of the SECOND FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH of New York."[50] It was to this church, after its removal to the Chatham Street Chapel, that Finney was called as pastor. Finney was installed on the 28th of September, 1832 by a commission of the Third Presbytery of New York, which was dominated by the New School and Finneyite forces.[51]

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[49] Ibid.

[50] Ibid.

Other Free Presbyterian Churches were established by "colonists" from the existing churches. The Third Church was organized by several young members of the First and Second churches, who felt it their duty to go out from the established churches to further the scheme set in motion. They gathered in Masonic Hall for public worship, December 9, 1832, and the Reverend D. C. Lansing, who had been invited from Utica to take charge of the congregation, was present to preach. On this occasion, a commission appointed by the Third Presbytery organized the congregation with a charter roll consisting of thirty-five members. Lansing was installed on February 10, 1833 and two young men were ordained elders on July 14th of that year. A spacious house of worship was built at

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51. "To facilitate further the founding of free churches, a number of Presbyterian ministers in the city succeeded in organizing the Third Presbytery, set up on the principle of 'elective affinity.' Those who took the lead in the movement included Samuel H. Cox, Henry Ludlow, William Patton, Elihu W. Baldwin, and Erskine Mason. As a group these men held theological views considerably less orthodox than those of their ministerial colleagues." Cole, *op*. *cit*., pp. 289-290.

the expense of 11,000 dollars and occupied by the new congregation on December 29, 1833, just one year from the formation of the church. In a similar manner, the Fourth Free Presbyterian Church was founded by a colony from the Second Church on January 5, 1834. This congregation rented an old brewery at the corner of Madison and Catharine Streets where they worshipped for a time after November 9, 1834. They were able, after a time, to purchase the lots on their rented site and begin to renovate the premises on the plan of the First Church. Meantime they rented a hall at Bowery and Division Streets for public worship, until their own building should be completed. At the time of the writing of the history of the Free Presbyterian Churches, in February of 1835, preparations were being made by colonists from the First and Third Churches, along with some individuals from the older established churches, to establish the Fifth Church. Also, it is interesting to note that one of the churches previously organized on the usual Presbyterian basis had received a small colony from the Third Church, with a view to reorganization as the Sixth Free Presbyterian Church.[52]

The popularity of these free churches may be deduced from the fact that in the first five years of its existence, the First Free Presbyterian Church admitted 735 members,

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[52] Lewis Tappan, op. cit., p. 774.

493 on profession of faith and 260 on certificates from other congregations.[53] The Second Church admitted 426 members, 302 by profession of faith; and the Third Church received 344 members, 203 by profession of faith. The Fourth Church, organized just over a year, is reported to have received 64 members: three of whom were studying for the ministry, and one preparing for missionary service.[54] This statistical picture does not tell the whole story, however, unless some consideration is given to Tappan's assertion that at least half of the converts associated with the Free Churches joined other churches.[55]

There were a number of ideas concerning the church and ministry which became a standard part of the theological culture of the Free Presbyterian Churches. They were championed by men like Tappan and proclaimed with vigor by Finney to thousands of people who were anxious to take up the cause of reviving the church. These ideas were not "thought up" by the Finneyites, they were their sharing in the evangelical pietist ethos of the nineteenth century. Tappan's selection and statement of them is worthy of note:

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[53] *Ibid.*

[54] *Ibid.*, p. 775.

[55] *Ibid.*

> The ministers of these Free Churches have moderate salaries, the church edifices are plainly built, and all the expenses attending public worship are on an economical scale. No one is admitted to the churches, on profession or by letter, who will not pledge himself or herself to abstain wholly from the manufacture, sale, or use of ardent spirit. The use of tobacco, also, can be said scarcely to exist in these churches. It is inculcated on the members to practise temperance in eating, and plainness in dress and furniture.[56]

Also, he stated that the minister of the First Church gave public notice "that he would not unite in marriage any member of his church with an unbeliever"; and in this connection commented that "the sinfulness of such unhallowed marriages is inculcated by all the ministers of these churches."[57] With regard to the maintenance of the church, voluntary offerings were received at every service, and on the first Sunday of each month, on "Communion Sabbath," church members deposited the sum of money which they had agreed to pay at these stated intervals for the support of public worship. A deficiency in this account was covered, at the end of the year, by a subscription among a few members of means.

Tappan believed that free churches should be extended to every city because they were "more in accordance with the spirit of the gospel than those that have been organized by the Presbyterian and Congregational denominations usually."[58]

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[56] Ibid., p. 776.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Ibid.

Indeed, he thought that the Presbyterian and Congregational Churches, as well as the free churches, ought to give more attention to the Methodist mode of preaching and thus achieve a more democratic proclamation as well as a more democratic polity in the church. "We see what wonderful success our Methodist brethren have had," he wrote, "by alluring to their houses of worship the middling classes of society; 'firing low,' as their great leader, Wesley, enjoined it upon them."[59] In a similar vein, he commented: "Let us not be ashamed to copy from the Methodists, or from any denomination, measures and modes of preaching that are blessed by the Holy Spirit; especially ministers and others would do well not to refuse to copy the example of Jesus Christ, who certainly well understood in what way to influence, most effectually, human society."[60] Finney was very much a man of this spirit, and it is not difficult to understand that in the Free Churches there was a ferment which would lead to further disruptions in the Presbyterian Church.

The future of the Free Churches depended upon a suitable ministry, and Finney was the perfect model for such a ministry. But where could his like be found, and educated? Tappan saw this problem clearly, and stated the case forcefully:

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[59] Ibid.

[60] Ibid.

> I have said that a new church might be organized in this city every year, out of each of the Free churches, provided suitable ministers could be obtained. Great difficulty and delay arise on this account; for it requires preachers of peculiar talents to be successful in Free churches. They must be "scribes well instructed"--Christians of much religious experience--of a revival spirit--sound theologians--ready extemporaneous speakers --not afraid of "new measures," nor disposed to substitute expediency for duty; and in all respects thoroughgoing Christian reformers. Such ministers will not have sleepy congregations, nor will the members of their churches be at ease in Zion, or so conform to the world that it is difficult to distinguish them from those who have no hope in Christ. We bless God that measures are in rapid progress to educate young ministers, who will have the courage to preach the whole gospel, and take a strong hold of the blessed work of converting the world to God.[61]

It was this view of the ministry that prepared the way for Finney's removal to Oberlin and a new career as a theological professor who would educate precisely this type of minister. 1835 was a great year for the Free Church movement and for Charles G. Finney. Three more Free Churches were planned, one of which was Finney's special project, the Broadway Tabernacle. Friends built him a new home on Broadway, he participated in the designing of his own church, and he was appointed Professor of Theology at Oberlin.[62]

The Free Churches of New York City were part of the populist tide coming into American culture during the Jacksonian era. Here was the revolt against wealth and status linked to the engine of New School theology. The driving force was the "benevolent empire," which merged the support of voluntary associations for Missions, temperance, abolition of the slaves, and religious education, to mention a few, with radical measures in the conversion of sinners. There were, however, unstable and disruptive elements built into this pattern which brought about the decline of the Free Church movement even while it seemed to be gaining ground. The maintenance of a charismatic ministry is by its very nature an unstable matter which seeks to become culturally viable through a process of routinization in stable, institutional forms. The pattern developed by the Free Church movement was not able to withstand the attacks made along the frontal line established upon the New School theology, especially at the point of its radical conversion techniques, nor the attacks upon the flanks which became vulnerable in the growing heat of the battle over the slavery issue. As evidence of the continued frontal attacks, consider a letter of Tappan to Finney in 1833:

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[61] Ibid., p. 777.

[62] Cf. Cole, op. cit., pp. 292-293.

> Rev. Dr. Phillips told Dr. Willitt (an episcopalian, but a good man) in the Steam Boat that the Free churches here were doing a great deal of mischief, that they denied the influence of the holy Spirit, etc. "Why," said he, "L. T. prayed at the chapel that sinners might convert themselves"--the old slander. What fodder that prayer has made for D.D.s!--What absurdity--if we believe that sinners can convert themselves what use is there in praying about the matter? How exceedingly low religion must

> be in a church, or in a heart when professors take pleasure in circulating such stories.[63]

These attacks were along the road to schism in the Presbyterian Church. The decisive issue, in the decline of the Free Churches, however, was the antislavery disruption.

2. The Decline Due to Abolitionism

After 1835 the Free Church movement began its rapid decline. The problem of a supply of suitable ministers, the theological contentions which led to the schism of 1837 within the Presbyterian Church, and a financial disruption in 1837 played their part in that decline. But, as we have stated above, the decisive reason for the decline was the movement's identification with abolitionism. The New York Antislavery Society was formed in the Chatham Street Chapel on October 2, 1833, and the church was attacked by a mob. The Young Men's Antislavery Society was organized in the Third Free Presbyterian Church in May, 1834.[64] The Sixth Free Church, the congregation of the Broadway Tabernacle, established an antislavery society and carried out a prominent celebration of the second anniversary of the emancipation of the West Indian slaves in 1837; also, they held services commemorating Lovejoy's death.[65] In addition to external inclinations given expression against this identification with abolitionism there were internal problems arising out of the clash of "gradualists" with the radical party of Lewis Tappan. Phyllis M. Bannan comments on the tension existing in the Fifth Free Presbyterian Church in this matter:

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[63] Lewis Tappan to Finney, July 10, 1833, Finney Papers, OCL.

[64] Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 293.

> The fifth free church embodied Tappan's favorite idea, that church members should not "form connexions in marriage or copartnerships in trade with ungodly persons." Tappan's coworkers, none too keen about this, were alienated when Tappan had a Negro elected trustee and they raised strong objections which killed the project.[66]

Lewis Tappan became disillusioned with the Free Churches on the antislavery issue because they failed to follow his lead. In 1841 he wrote to Hastings:

> At an early period of the history of the Free churches in this city an attempt was made to introduce the peculiar principles of abolitionism into them. They had been instituted to produce a reform, and it was thought that every branch of christian benevolence, ought to be grafted upon the Free church system. Some of us thought that the "negro pew" should be done away. . . . Finding nothing could be done in a matter so near my heart I left the church. The distinctive principles of the Free Church system were begun to be lost sight of--pride, prejudice,

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[65] Ibid.

[66] Phyllis M. Bannan, "Arthur and Lewis Tappan: A Study of Religious and Reform Movements in New York City," (typed Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1950), p. 37.

> worldliness gained the ascendancy--and the Free churches, so called, very soon became like other churches.[67]

Although Finney had wholeheartedly supported the free pew scheme, he was not a strong supporter of Tappan's radical views concerning the seating of people, irrespective of color, in the churches or the strictures on business relationships with unbelievers. This disaffection followed Finney to Oberlin, for we read in Tappan's Diary that among the things which perplexed him at the beginning of the new year of 1836 was "continuing my subscription of $600 a year to Oberlin Institute." He noted, "Mr. Finney inculcates that we must not treat men irrespective of color in churches. -- That a church must not require that its members shall not form partnership with unbelievers."[68] In April of 1836 Finney called upon Lewis and Arthur Tappan to rectify, if possible, their relationship to the Oberlin Institute. Lewis Tappan recorded in his Diary that his brother refused to give any more money until Finney's views on the slavery question were changed; he, himself, had already expressed his doubts about further benevolence to Oberlin. Finney was to move toward the Tappan position on slavery, but at that time he refused to be joustled by them. Lewis Tappan wrote:

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[67] Lewis Tappan to S. D. Hastings, April 11, 1841, Tappan Papers, Library of Congress.

[68] Lewis Tappan, Diary, February 26, 1836, Library of Congress.

> Mr. F. said very emphatically I shall not be influenced in my conduct by your brother and your threats not to pay more money. I replied I suppose not, we do not wish you to be, but we must withold our money if the condition on which it was given is not complied with. I lament having such a discordance with Mr. F. whom I love and respect on many accounts, but I believe his views and practices on the slavery question have done much injury, and that the inculcation of them on students will be very injurious.[69]

J. J. Shipherd, the founder of Oberlin, called on Lewis Tappan in May and attempted to settle the matter. One senses, in the Diary, that the matter had cooled somewhat, and we know that the Tappans continued to be generous benefactors of the infant college in Ohio. His recording of this incident reads:

> Reverend J. Shipherd of Oberlin called to see me this evening and we talked over the matter of my subscription. Mr. S. thinks that I am held to pay it. I told him that it was my deliberate opinion that I was not (because Brother F. is so unsound on the anti-slavery question) still if other persons in whom we placed confidence thought otherwise I should not set my opinions against theirs.[70]

Despite the auspicious beginning of the Free Church movement, these internal and external problems were eclipsing its influence. The Home Missionary Society and the First

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[69] Ibid., April 26, 1836.

[70] Ibid., May 6, 1836.

Presbytery continued their claim that there was no need for it, and the Presbytery hotly disapproved of many of its practices. Nevertheless, the impulse given to this movement and the cause of abolition by Finney's revivals, and the philanthropists who supported them, marked a notable reform in the church and ministry despite its decline in the years 1835 to 1840.[71] There were eleven Free Churches in New York City with organizations continuing until 1840.[72] As we have already noted, one of the Free Churches in Rochester quibbled itself out of existence, and the other became established as a regular Presbyterian Church.

3. Finney Leaves the Presbyterian Church

While Finney was the pastor of the Second Free Presbyterian Church at the Chatham Street Chapel he became dissatisfied with the difficulty of administering discipline through the centralized polity of Presbyterianism. In his Memoirs he recalls two instances which highlighted his problem and perplexity. In the first case a member of one of the older Presbyterian churches came to the Second Church with a recommendation of good standing and was promptly received. Subsequently the pastor and session were informed that this person had committed an offense while a member of the other congregation which required discipline. Finney took the matter to Presbytery with the understanding that since the offense was committed under another jurisdiction it was their responsibility to deal with it. The Third Presbytery ruled that the individual was now under the jurisdiction of the Second Church, and it was their responsibility to act. Finney recalled, simply, "We did so."[73]

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[71] Cf. Bannan, op. cit., p. 83.

[72] L. Nelson Nichols, The History of Broadway Tabernacle of New York City (New Haven: The Tuttle, Morehouse & Taylor Co., 1940), pp. 68-69.

Soon after this, another case occurred in which a woman from another church was received in good standing; but it became known that she had been guilty of an offense which called for discipline. In accordance with the previous ruling of the Third Presbytery the session excommunicated her. She appealed the case to Presbytery, and they ruled that the offense was not committed under the jurisdiction of the Second Church and declared their discipline was therefore null and void. Finney argued that these two cases were exactly similar and that the two rulings of Presbytery were precisely opposite and inconsistent. "Dr. Cox replied," wrote Finney, "that they would not be governed by their own precedent, or by any other precedent; and talked so warmly, and pressed the case so hard, that the presbytery went with him."[74] The intimation of the Memoirs is that this event was the final straw, and Finney threw his weight with those who favored the proposition that the new Sixth Free Church to be housed in the Broadway Tabernacle, which was being built for Finney, should be a Congregational Church.

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[73] Finney, Memoirs, p. 324.

When one reflects upon the history of Finney's ministry to this important juncture, he is impressed with several significant characteristics of that ministry. First of all, it would seem that Finney's association with the Presbyterian Church had come about by fortuitous circumstances rather than by an unqualified decision. Indeed, from the very beginning we have seen how he recoiled from the prevalent "hyper-Calvinism" of the Old School before and after his conversion. Both the manner of his ministry and his theology were held suspect by a large segment of the Presbyterian and Congregational churchmen. Secondly, we note that his evangelistic enterprise led him into cooperation with various denominations, and he always considered his mission to be non-sectarian in the midst of revivals. Thirdly, although ordained in the Presbyterian Church, he had no pastoral experience in that

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[74] Ibid., p. 325.

Church before coming to the Chatham Street Chapel. It is true that he served for a short time as a home missionary pastor to the Evans Mills and Antwerp congregations, but they were ostensibly Congregational though influenced by the Plan of Union of 1801. Therefore, when he came to the Second Church he had labored primarily as an itinerant evangelist and had had little to do with the practical workings of Presbyterian church government. Having been a trial lawyer before his conversion, we may imagine how he felt about the inconsistent ruling made by the Third Presbytery.

That the dissatisfactions were mutually held can be verified by turning to the notable reviews of Finney's Sermons on Various Subjects and the Lectures on Revivals in The Biblical Repertory and Theological Review. Both of these works were published by Finney in 1835, and they were simultaneously reviewed by Albert Dod for that organ of the Princeton theology. Finney had dared to criticize the Westminster Confession of Faith, and the reviewer gave him what he considered to be appropriate thanks:

> We tender him our thanks for the substantial service he has done the church by exposing the naked deformities of the New Divinity. He can render her still another, and in rendering it perform only his plain duty, by leaving her communion, and finding one within which he can preach and publish his opinions without making war upon the standards in which he solemnly professed his faith.[75]

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[75] Albert Dod, "Finney's Sermons," The Biblical Repertory and Theological Review, VII (July, 1835), 526-27.

The second review left no doubt as to how the association of gentlemen at Princeton felt on the Finney issue; and they spoke for a large segment of the Presbyterian Church. Dod wrote:

> We have spoken our minds plainly on this subject. We intended from the beginning not to be misunderstood. It is high time that all the friends of pure doctrine and of decent order in the house of God, should speak plainly. Mr. Finney was kindly and tenderly expostulated with at the commencement of his career. Mr. Nettleton, than whom no one living was better qualified or entitled to give counsel on this subject, discharged fully his duty towards him. Others did the same. But their advice was spurned, their counsels disregarded. To their envy, or blindness, did he impute their doubts of the propriety of his course. . . . It is the clear duty of the church now to meet him and his co-reformers with open and firm opposition. . . . We conclude this article, as we did our former, by pointing out to Mr. Finney his duty to leave our church.[76]

The building of the Broadway Tabernacle was begun in the spring of 1835, and a year later Finney was installed as pastor in the completed edifice.[77] Finney was now the pastor of a Congregational Church, but it can be doubted that this was considered a great gain by many of the Congregational churchmen. After all, his theology was looked upon with suspicion by that denomination as it was by the Presbyterians. It seems to have been chiefly upon the grounds of church government and administration that Finney chose to become a Congregationalist. A brief summary of the chronology of the years 1835-1836 gives us the context of this significant change in Finney's official relationships.

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[76] Albert Dod, "Finney's Lectures," op. cit., VII (October, 1835), 673-74.

[77] L. Nelson Nichols, op. cit., pp. 58-61.

In 1835 he accepted an appointment of Professor of Theology at the Oberlin Collegiate Institute (later Oberlin College), a post which he held from February of that year until his death. The construction of the Broadway Tabernacle was begun with the understanding that he would be the pastor. In May of 1835 he published Lectures on Revivals of Religion, and in June or July Sermons on Various Subjects was published. He left New York for Oberlin in May of 1835, but continued to be the pastor of the Chatham Street Chapel where he preached in the winter months. On March 2, 1836 he took his dismission from the Presbyterian Church and became the pastor of the Broadway Tabernacle Congregational Church. His name was erased from the roll of the Third Presbytery of New York on the 13th of June. Meanwhile, his Sermons on Important Subjects was published, and in December he began a series of "Lectures to Professing Christians," at the Broadway Tabernacle, in which he first expounded his perfectionist views.[78]

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[78] Cpr. William G. McLoughlin, editor, op. cit., p. liv; and, Wright, op. cit., p. 107. On April 6, 1837 Finney gave up the pastorate of the Broadway Tabernacle and became the pastor of the Oberlin Congregational Church, which pastorate he held until 1872.

The general decline of the Free Church movement was experienced in the Sixth Church (Broadway Tabernacle). In fact, as early as February of 1839 the free pew system broke down completely. Lewis Tappan, completely exasperated, wrote to his friend Hastings: "The Trustees of the Tabernacle are letting the slips. Conditions--no white person to admit any colored person into his pew, no colored person to admit a white person!! and yet on the pillars at the entrance are the words 'Sixth Free Church'--'Seats Free'!!"[79] Finney left the Presbyterian Church as it followed the road to schism in 1837, and he left the Broadway Tabernacle after about one year as pastor. There were some slight changes in organization, but under a succession of distinguished ministers the Broadway Tabernacle continued to be a center of Christian influence. During the heated antislavery agitation it exerted a nation-wide influence.[80]

C. The Call to Oberlin and the Road to Schism

1. Finney's Removal to Oberlin

After the remarkable success of the Rochester Revival, as has been indicated, there were many calls for Finney's ministry. None was as insistent as that of Weld to come to the western valley. Weld believed that Finney was the man to "electrify the whole mass" of that humanity settling there. Although he decided for the urban frontier, the situation in the West was always before him. In March of 1832 Weld wrote to Finney:

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[79] Lewis Tappan to Samuel D. Hastings, February 7, 1839, Tappan Papers, Library of Congress.

[80] Cf. F. G. Beardsley, op. cit., p. 113.

> Since writing you last I have had abundant opportunity to feel the Western Pulse. Every *throb* has *deepened* the convictions expressed in that letter. There is not a spot on the globe which so much demands your labors as *this*. The influence throw[n] into this valley by New York and New England revivals has hardly been as the small dust of the ballance (sic). Having gone over the length and breadth of this region, I speak what I know and affirm what I have seen and heard. Depend upon it this vast region must be swayed by influences *home manufactured*. Western men are *clanish*; the[y] will not receive an impulse from abroad; but bring a foreign source of influence into their midst, *embed* it in local relations, and you may electrify the whole mass. This is no *theory*, it is palpable fact. You will find it so.[81]

In April of that year Finney was obviously thinking about going west, and had written to associates about it. Horatio Foote, in Bridgewater, New York, wrote to Finney at Boston, "You speak of the Western Valley, what do you propose?" Behind this question was a concern, increasingly held by many, that there should be a school for the training of revival ministers. His comments pointed to Finney's future:

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[81] T. Weld to Finney, March 20, 1832, *Finney Papers*, OCL.

> One thing we want in this country and must have it somewhere, a school of the right stamp to bring forward young ministers who will be revival men, and unshackeled. We have been looking to the Oneida Institute, but I fear it will fail of the object. Do you know any plan going on to effect it? What is the Lain (sic) Seminary to be at Cincinati (sic), Ohio? Is Doct. Beecher to take charge of it.[82]

The charter of Lane Seminary was granted February 11, 1829, but after the admission of three or four students under a single professor, during the first year, there was a suspension of the academic program. The Lanes had endowed the institution at Walnut Hills with the understanding that it should be a manual labor school, "to prepare indigent young men for the ministry."[83] However, some members of the board opposed this scheme, and it was not until January, 1831, that George W. Gale of Oneida Institute was able to assure the board of its feasibility. Following Gale's recommendation a steward to supervise the seminary farm at Walnut Hills, just outside of Cincinnati, was appointed in February of 1831. On October 22, 1830 the board unanimously appointed Lyman Beecher "President of Lane Seminary and Professor of Didactic & Polemic Theology." At this time Beecher was the pastor of a Congregational Church in Boston, but the New School supporters of Beecher and the seminary were certain they could arrange for the president-elect to be "Presbyterianized."[84] It should be noted here that all of this took place during the upswing of the New York revivals and their agent, Charles G. Finney.

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[82] Horatio Foote to Finney, April 6, 1832, Finney Papers, OCL.

[83] Cf. Fletcher, op. cit., I, pp. 50-51.

Horatio Foote had been perfectly right in his estimation of the situation. Oneida Institute was not organized to provide a theological education for revival enthusiasts, but it had been a reservoir for such young men, most of them, like Theodore Weld, converts under the ministry of Finney. Lane Seminary had elicitated a question mark in the minds of many until the appointment of Beecher as president. This appointment seemed to assure that the seminary would enjoy the financial backing of the "benevolent empire"; and that it would follow the lead of the New School theologians, revivalists, and antislavery proponents. What Foote could not have anticipated, however, was that the institutions of the Presbyterian Church could no longer hold the Finneyite ferment. The new wine would have to be put in new wine skins.

The story of the Lane Rebellion has been excellently presented by Fletcher,[85] thus only the bare outline of the

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[84] Ibid., p. 51.

[85] Ibid., pp. 150-166.

event is necessary here. The largest segment of the student body at Lane Seminary was that of the Oneidas, young men from Gale's manual labor institute at Whitesboro. As Finneyites they were predisposed to any benevolent movement, and under the leadership of Weld they began to prepare for a thorough and well-organized debate on the slavery issue. The students were caught up into this issue with such zeal that the meetings became something more than debates: they were anti-slavery revivals.

The members of the Board of Trustees of Lane Seminary were mostly well-established business men of Cincinnati who found these activities very disturbing. Cincinnati had been afflicted by riots, and merchants as well as manufacturers were well aware that much of their business was done in Kentucky and further south; they could not afford to have their names associated with an institution avowing abolitionism. President Beecher hoped to prevent a clash between the students and the outraged townspeople, and adopted his usual conciliating attitude. However, neither the Oneidas nor the excited citizens and members of the Board were amenable to moderation. The Executive Committee of the trustees adopted a hard line in their report to the full board which was adopted and ordered to be published. The unfortunate decision of the board was put in language which threatened the proper scope of theological education and academic freedom. It argued that "education must be completed before the young are fitted to engage in the collisions of active life," and therefore, "no associations or Societies among the students ought to be allowed in /the/ Seminary except such as have for their immediate object improvement in the prescribed course of studies."[86] The threat of expulsion under this action of the board did not deter the zeal of the students, and in October of 1834 twenty-eight students presented a joint request for dismission from the seminary.

Beecher worked feverishly to save the seminary from this division, but he had lost influence with both the board and the students. In fact, the action of the Board of Trustees had been taken during his absence and his attempts for conciliation failed. Weld held the nucleus of the Oneidas together, and with the aid of antislavery enthusiasts established an informal seminary at nearby Cumminsville. Here they listened to a few informal lectures and commuted to Cincinnati to carry on their benevolent work among the negroes. It was a prototype of the "Free University" which has recently enjoyed favor among numbers of contemporary students in revolt against the administration of established universities. The Lane Rebels were to provide a needed impulse to the infant college at Oberlin.

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[86] Ibid., I, p. 158.

The Oberlin Collegiate Institute was established in 1833, under the leadership of J. J. Shipherd, as a manual labor school to inculcate evangelical revivalism and benevolent enterprises as an antidote for the moral declension of the West. In 1834 Oberlin was suffering from the lack of adequate financial support and a sufficient number of students. Shipherd was delighted to discover that the Lane Rebels would favor the idea of coming to Oberlin if Asa Mahan could be secured as president, John Morgan as a professor, and Finney as the Professor of Theology. It was further agreed that there should be freedom of discussion on all reform issues and that negroes should be admitted to the Institute on an equal basis with whites. Shipherd and the colonists joined in petitioning the trustees to adopt this plan immediately. The plan had the great virtue of bringing together a ready-made student body of theological students with a proper faculty to provide a school of the "right stamp" for the training of a ministry in the West; and it would attract the economic resources of the Tappans and others. Shipherd was assured that eight professorships and ten thousand dollars would be subscribed if Finney would become Professor of Theology and if negroes would be received at the Institute.[87]

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[87] Cf. Wright, op. cit., pp. 129-135.

All of these conditions were met, and on February 12, 1835 the following document was sent to Finney from the Board of Trustees:

> At a legal meeting of the Oberlin Collegiate Institute the following resolutions were proposed, vis:
>
> Resolved that a Professorship of Theology be now established in this Institution.
>
> Resolved that the Rev. Charles G. Finney of the City of N. York be, and he hereby is duly elected, and appointed Professor of Theology in the Oberlin Collegiate Institute.
>
> Resolved that, as a provision for his temporal support this board has promised to pay him annually the sum of 600 Dollars, and to furnish him a house suited to his station and also a garden.
>
> Resolved that the expenses of Mr. Finney's removal to Oberlin with his family be defrayed from the funds of the Institute.
>
> Resolved that the question respecting the reception of students into this Seminary be, in all cases, left to the decision of the Faculty of this Institution: and that to them also be committed the internal management of its concerns, provided always that they be holden amenable to the board and that the said Faculty shall not be liable to censure, or interruption from the board, so long as their measures do not infringe upon the Laws and the general principles of the Institution.
>
> By direction of the Board, John Keep, President.[88]

Finney left New York for Oberlin on May 5, 1835, but there was some concern that he might be seduced by Western Reserve

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[88] John Keep to Finney, February 12, 1835, Finney Papers, OCL.

College, a new institution founded under Plan of Union auspices at Hudson, Ohio. They, also, wanted Finney as a Professor of Theology. Arthur Tappan wrote to John Keep, saying:

> Rev. Mr. Finney left here yesterday and may be with you before this is received. I hope he will not feel it to be his duty to turn aside from the great work the friends of liberal principles confidently hope to be carried forward at Oberlin thro the instrumentality of the Prest. and Professors elect, to even look at the scheme . . . the friends of the Western R. College have set on foot to draw him in there. A change of men must take place at Hudson as cannot be looked for before any thing can be expected from that institution. Besides the funds subscribed in this city are pledged to Oberlin and cannot be diverted without the concurrence of the subscribers and the Trustees of Oberlin Institute.[89]

Indeed, the terms of the subscription had been made very clear,[90] and Finney did not dally with Western Reserve. In June Finney made an official response to the terms of his appointment with some stipulations of his own. His first condition was that he should have leave of absence "to labor either as Pastor or as an Evangelist among the churches so much of my time as in my own judgment shall be best."[91] His reasons for this stipulation were that he could not leave his congregation in New York, in which he had only recently taken pastoral charge, without returning to labor among them; and that he believed that a professor of theology must spend a considerable portion of the time in the ministry, or "he is wholly unqualified to train young men up to the spirit of the age." "Until I shall have made the experiment," he added, "I can not tell how much of my time it will be necessary to give up to teaching or to preaching, and therefore must be the judge after I shall have made the experiment."[92] A second condition was that sufficient funds should be available to keep the school beyond financial embarrassment and provide proper accommodations for the students. His third condition was that the internal control of the school must rest in the hands of the faculty, particularly with regard to the admission of students. He stipulated that it must be the faculty's decision "to admit or reject those who in their judgment shall be proper subjects for admission or rejection irrespective of color." All was agreed on both sides and Charles G. Finney became the first Professor of Theology at Oberlin College.

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[89] Arthur Tappan to Rev. John Keep, May 6, 1835, Tappan Papers, Library of Congress. Also, Arthur Tappan to J. J. Shipherd, May 6, 1835, Shipherd Papers, OCL.

[90] "The written condition is that Rev. C. G. Finney should be Professor of Theology . . ., and the verbal addition was that anti-slavery principles should be recognised in the institution, freely discussed and inculcated; and that the broad ground of moral reform, in all its departments, should characterize the instruction." Lewis Tappan to Shipherd, May 5, 1835, Tappan Papers, Library of Congress.

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[91] Finney to the Board of Trustees of the Oberlin Collegiate Institute, June 30, 1835, Finney Papers, OCL.

[92] Ibid.

Within the next few months the relationship between Lewis Tappan and Finney became difficult because Finney did not share Tappan's view with regard to the seating of negroes in the churches. As we have seen, the Tappans threatened to withdraw their support from Oberlin; also, Lewis Tappan took exception to the inclusion of Finney's portrait in a recently published volume as a mark of vanity. "I know Finney is not a perfect man," wrote Weld to Tappan, "and if he is influenced by the motives which you suppose in this matter he has greater defects than I ever dreamed of or do now, but yet take him for all in all, when shall we look on his like again? I do believe your heart is not right toward him."[93]

Things went excitingly well in those first months, and in July there was a movement to have all of Finney's time at Oberlin. "We are negociating (sic) to get all of Finney's time," wrote Thome to Weld. "The Faculty and Theologicals have each written a letter to the church in N. Y. urging them to let Bro. F. go."[94] Finney continued to exercise his pastoral charge over the New York congregation, as well as his teaching responsibilities at Oberlin, until the spring of the next year. It then became clear that his health could not stand such a heavy commitment of his energies, which had been so severely depleted by the excessive demands of his itinerant ministry and illness. On April 6, 1837, he presented a request to the Broadway Tabernacle Church that his pastoral relation with them be dissolved. The New York Association acted favorably to his request with the following resolution: "Our beloved pastor, having requested a dismission from the pastorship of this Church on account of the state of his health, Resolved that the church grant the request, and the Rev. Charles G. Finney is hereby dismissed from the pastorship of the Tabernacle Church and cordially recommended to the service of the churches whereby God may call him, as a devoted and faithful minister of the Lord Jesus Christ."[95] Finney now belonged to Oberlin but his influence continued to stir the presbyteries of New York.

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[93] Theodore Weld to Lewis Tappan, April 5, 1836, in Gilbert H. Barnes and Dwight L. Dumond (eds.), Letters of Theodore Dwight Weld, Angelina Grimké Weld and Sarah Grimké (New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1934).

[94] James A. Thome to Weld, July 16, 1836, Ibid.

2. The Finneyite Ferment in the "Affinity Presbyteries"

The economic status of a burgeoning America in 1836 was near collapse. If the economy failed, much of the grand scheme of the benevolent societies would falter. That a feeling of uneasiness prevailed is illustrated by a circular addressed to the churches of the Presbytery of Lorain, Ohio. "The obvious cause which is now extensively inducing a spirit of worldliness," wrote the Moderator, Alfred H. Betts, "is the temptation arising out of the commercial state of the country and the rage for speculation, which has disturbed the tranquility of many minds."[96] The crash of 1837, which accompanied the "rage for speculation," severely curtailed the benevolent societies and subscriptions to such enterprises as the Oberlin Collegiate Institute.

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[95] Resolutions of the Broadway Tabernacle Church, April 6, 1837, Finney Papers, OCL.

This economic circumstance served to heighten the confusion of the imbroglio of the conflicting parties in the Presbyterian and Congregational Churches. The friction between the Old School and New School parties increased at every point where the Plan of Union altered traditional Presbyterian ecclesiastical polity. As church membership grew under the stimulus of revivals, Presbyteries were divided: usually in such a way as to express the party affinity of the churches in a particular area. For instance, the circular, mentioned above, was sent out on the basis of a division of the Presbytery of Cleveland into three Presbyteries: Cuyahoga, Medina, and Lorain. The circular made it clear that the division was a matter of convenience which favored the success of the Plan of Union in that area.[97]

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[96] Alfred H. Betts, "A Circular, addressed to Churches embraced by the Presbytery of Lorain," November 16, 1836, Cowles Papers, OCL.

Another cause of friction was the conflict between the American Home Missionary Society and the General Assembly's Board of Missions as they attempted to work in the same fields. This conflict, among others, precipitated a "High Church" sentiment in the Presbyterian Church which reacted against benevolent societies as they threatened the right of the Church to create and control its own agencies. The Plan of Union and the benevolent societies inculcated a different view of the church and ministry, and increasingly tended to create and support agencies which cut across the ecclesiastical order of the Presbyterian Church. Of course the doctrinal controversies and the disputes over the slavery issue were all along the road to schism. Zebulon Crocker, writing in 1838 immediately after the "catastrophe," relates how much feeling was elicited by watchwords such as "new measures," "New Haven theology," "Finneyism," etc.[98] Contemporary sociologists of religion have pointed out the significance of conflict reduced to the exchange of "passwords," which identify the individuals in their party affiliation. By 1837 the various parties were reduced to acting out roles of conflict, in which theological identities were identified by "passwords" in a "speech community."[99]

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[97] Ibid.

[98] Cf. Zebulon Crocker, The Catastrophe of the Presbyterian Church in 1837, Including a Full View of the Recent Theological Controversies in New England (New Haven: B. & W. Noyes, 1838), pp. 232-233, and passim.

Finney's influence was omnipresent because of the tremendous success of his revivals and the significance placed upon his popularization of the New Haven theology because of that success. This influence became institutionalized, in the Presbyterian Church, through a strange phenomenon called the "elective affinity Presbytery." The principle of "elective affinity" seems to have been first used in 1768 when disputes arose over the realignment of the Presbyteries of Donegal and New Castle. The Synod formed the new Presbytery of Carlisle of the ministers west of the Susquehanna, and annexed others to the Presbytery of New Castle, thereafter named Lancaster. An attempt to restore the Presbyteries of Donegal and New Castle by a minority of ministers failed. Synod then proposed that the dissatisfied members be permitted to unite as they should choose with the Presbyteries of Donegal, New Castle, or Philadelphia Second.[100]

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[99] Cf. David O. Moberg, The Church as a Social Institution, The Sociology of American Religion (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1962), p. 243, for an interesting discussion of this phenomenon.

[100] E. H. Gillett, History of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Publication Committee, 1864), I, pp. 142-143.

In 1830 eight members of the Presbytery of New York made application to the Synod of New York to be set off into a new Presbytery. The request was granted, according to the precedent of "elective affinity," and the Third Presbytery of New York was constituted. This Presbytery rapidly gathered together others with congenial views and principles and soon became a powerful agency for furthering the work of the Free Church movement, the benevolent societies, and the New School theology. Young missionaries from New England, associated with the American Home Missionary Society, used this Presbytery as an agency for ordination as they passed through to the West. It was through this Presbytery that Lyman Beecher was "Presbyterianized" in order to become the president of Lane Seminary. This was Finney's Presbytery, and in it the theology and new measures which he proclaimed were deeply embedded.[101] The Second Presbytery of Philadelphia had also gathered force as an "elective affinity" Presbytery about the nucleus of Barnes.

Baird reports that the Assembly of 1831 was the largest body of commissioners that had ever met to that date; and in

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101. Cf. Samuel J. Baird, A History of the New School, and of the Questions Involved in the Disruption of the Presbyterian Church in 1838 (Philadelphia: Claxton, Remsen, & Haffelfinger, 1868), pp. 402-403. Written with an Old School bias, Baird remarked that the Third Presbytery "became a most active and powerful instrument for corrupting the church (p. 402)."

it the New School party first appeared as a majority with an organized program. This program was motivated by a zeal for the benevolent societies and a hostility to the Board of Missions. This hostility was heightened by the Old School views of the Board represented in the rejection of the Tenessee Hopkinsians, and be the activity of the President and Secretary in the trial of Barnes.[102] It is not without significance that N. S. S. Beman, a Finneyite, was elected Moderator of this Assembly. It was in this Assembly that the Board of Missions attempted to steal a march into the great valley of the West where the American Home Missionary Society was striving to gain control. The Old School did not wish the western enterprise to be in the hands of a voluntary society, and beyond the control of the judicatories of the Church. The resolution presented by the Board involved the proposition that every Presbyterian congregation disposed to receive aid from the Board should be supplied "with a faithful and devoted minister of the gospel of Christ." This resolution was referred to a committee which, under the influence of a New School majority, reported to the floor of the Assembly a plan of union with the American Home Missionary Society.[103]

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[102] Ibid., p. 363.

[103] Ibid., p. 376.

The following Assemblies through that of 1834 had New School majorities, but the Old School was in the ascendancy in 1834, and gained control in 1835.[104] With this impetus, the Assembly ruled to terminate the principle of "elective affinity" and the Presbyteries thus organized in 1834.[105] The way was now opened to deal with the Plan of Union. The following resolution was affirmed by the Assembly of 1835:

> Resolved, That this Assembly deem it no longer desirable that churches should be formed in our Presbyterian connection, agreeably to the plan adopted by the Assembly and the General Association of Connecticut, in 1801. Therefore, resolved, that our brethren of the General Association of Connecticut be, and they hereby are, respectfully requested to consent, that said plan shall be, from and after the next meeting of that Association, declared to be annulled. And resolved, that the annulling of said plan shall not, in any wise, interfere with the existence and lawful operation of churches which have been already formed on this plan.[106]

The Assembly of 1836 was again under a New School majority, but it seemed that nothing could be done to halt the march toward schism.

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[104] W. W. Sweet, Religion on the American Frontier, Vol. II, The Presbyterians 1783-1840 (New York: Harper & Bros., 1936), p. 108.

[105] Baird, *op. cit.*, p. 406. The Old School estimate of the elective affinity Presbyteries was as follows: "In the elective affinity Presbyteries and Synod, and the judicatories, in New York and the West, built up under the operation of the Plan of Union, and through the agency of the American Education and Home Missionary Societies, and sustained by them, the requisite organizations are provided, to corrupt the theology of the church, and to supercede its Constitution. The Plan of Union, instead of being used as a temporary expedient, is treated as a sacred and time-honored covenant and constitution, paramount to the constitution of the church itself . . . (p. 418)." Cf. also, Gillett, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 472, 477, 481, 498.

[106] *Ibid.*, pp. 444-445.

When the General Assembly met in Philadelphia, May of 1837, the question of the unity of the Church was in every mind. As the Assembly proceeded it became clear that the Old School majority intended to force action on some radical measures. On May 22nd the Assembly resolved that "the act of the Assembly of 1801, entitled a 'Plan of Union,' be, and the same is hereby, abrogated."[107] The vote upon this radical measure tested the numerical strength of the opposing parties: it was 143 to 110.[108] This resolution, and others which were to follow, tended to consolidate more power in the General Assembly at the expense of the Presbyteries and Synods.

Having torn out the root, with the abrogation of the Plan of Union, the Assembly began to attack the branches. On May 30th a resolution was put "that, by the operation of the abrogation of the Plan of Union of 1801, the Synod of the Western Reserve is, and is hereby declared to be, no longer a part of the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America."[109] The vote on this issue demonstrated a similar majority to that on the Plan of Union resolution: 132 ayes and

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[107] Gillett, _op_. _cit_., p. 504.

[108] _Ibid_.

[109] _Ibid_., p. 511.

105 nays.[110] Next, the voluntary societies were brought under fire, and on June 2nd a resolution was passed "affirming that the organization and operations of the so-called American Home Missionary Society and American Education Society, and its branches of whatever name, are exceedingly injurious to the peace and purity of the Presbyterian Church. We recommend, therefore, that they cease to operate within any of our churches."[111]

The very next day, Saturday morning, a resolution proposing to exscind the Synods of Utica, Geneva, and Genesee on the same grounds as the Western Reserve had been exscinded was brought to the floor. Discussion was heated, but on Monday afternoon the resolution was put to a vote, and it was determined, by a vote of 115 to 88, that these Synods were "declared to be out of the ecclesiastical connection of the Presbyterian Church" and "not in form or in fact an integral portion of said Church."[112]

By these decisive measures four Synods and nearly thirty Presbyteries were cut off from the Church, thus separating nearly one-fifth of the total membership from the Church with one blow. In addition to these actions, the Board of Foreign

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[110] Ibid., p. 513.

[111] Ibid.

[112] Ibid.

Missions was established;[113] and various resolutions condemning doctrinal errors were passed with overwhelming majority votes.[114] When the General Assembly of 1838 met in Philadelphia, the next May, the first question was how it should be constituted. The roll was reported according to the exscinding acts of the last Assembly. Commissioners, thus excluded, appealed to the Assembly for a place upon the roll, but were denied. The schism was completed with the formulation of another General Assembly. In 1838 there were two Presbyterian Churches constructed out of the one.[115]

Once the schism had taken place, the New School Presbyterian Church was faced with the necessity of developing its own structures. During the decade of the 1840's there was a decided growth of Presbyterian feeling which began to divide them from their Congregationalist allies. Dissatisfied with the management of home missions and the education of the ministry by the interdenominational voluntary societies they established their own boards in 1852, and thus became more truly denominational in character. Concurrently, a national convention of the Congregationalist Churches met in Albany, N. Y., and in 1852 voted to discontinue the Plan of Union, which had continued in cooperation with the New School Presbyterians.[116] The growth of denominationalism in this period marked a turning aside from the innovations adopted by Finney, and spread through his revivals. It must be concluded that Finney's "new measures" for the church and ministry tended to dissolve ecclesiastical structures rather than support them.

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[113] Ibid., p. 514.

[114] Ibid., p. 516.

[115] Ibid., pp. 530ff.

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[116] Robert E. Thompson, A History of the Presbyterian Churches in the United States (New York: The Christian Literature Co., 1895), pp. 142-143.

IV. THE CHURCH AND MINISTRY IN THE MIDST OF REVIVALS

A. The New England Response: Nettleton and Beecher

1. The Response of Nettleton

From the time Charles G. Finney became a novice preacher of enthusiastic revivalism under Presbyterian auspices, in 1824, to his dismission from that Church, in 1836, his innovations were not only a factor in wave after wave of revivals but also the storm center of conflict within the church. The practice of his "new measures" led to a disruption which focused in the New Lebanon Convention in 1827; and the wide dissemination of his theology, which resulted from the acclaim he received in connection with the Rochester Revival of 1830-1831 and the first publishing of his Lectures on Revivals of Religion and Sermons on Various Subjects in 1835, so threatened Old School leaders that they repeatedly called for him to leave the Presbyterian Church.

The confrontation at New Lebanon, between Eastern and Western revival leaders, has been shown in its sectional and cultural perspective as well as with regard to the specific issues discussed.[1] Here it is argued that Nettleton's eclipse at the New Lebanon Convention marks the point at which New

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[1] Cf. above, pp. 66ff.

England orthodoxy becomes obsolescent. As is usually the case with a person in whom obsolescence is manifested, Nettleton was a tragic figure. Asahel Nettleton (1783-1844) was ordained an evangelist by the South Consociation of Litchfield County, Connecticut, in the summer of 1817. This was the county from which Finney's family came; and from which Charles and his parents immigrated to Western New York, when he was two years old. Whereas Nettleton was thoroughly socialized in the old New England way, Finney was reared on the frontier of New England migration. Nettleton employed the traditional methods of preaching established by Jonathan Edwards, and carefully avoided excessive bursts of emotion in this revival ministry. His preaching was intellectual and doctrinal. When he stood forth to oppose Finney in 1827, he had already taken a stand against the practice of manufacturing a revival, as cautiously attempted by Timothy Dwight in 1808. He was originally allied with Lyman Beecher against the western innovators, but severed that relationship when he joined with Bennet Tyler, and others of the Andover School, in his dispute with the New Haven group.[2]

The tide of the New Haven theology and the new measures was coming in, but Nettleton was on the wrong side of the

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[2] Cf. C. C. Cole, Jr., The Social Ideas of the Northern Evangelists 1826-1860 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1954), pp. 20-22.

Tyler-Taylor dispute and he was simply washed aside. Beecher, always sensitive to the tides, stood with the New Haven theologians. Nor did Nettleton compare favorably with the charismatic Finney. "He himself was old and broken," wrote Beecher, "Mr. Finney young and robust. The one was reverential, timid, secretive; the other bold, striking, demonstrative. The style of one was subdued, that of the other full of eclat. . . . The one, being crafty, took them with guile; the other, being violent, took them by force."[3]

Nevertheless, Nettleton's response to the western revivals and the new measures adopted in them was representative of a large segment of the New England church. In a letter to the Reverend Mr. Aikin, of Utica, he wrote:

> In the remarks which I have made, you will understand me. I separate between the efficacy of the measures adopted in the Western revivals, and the evils which have grown out of these measures. Of the former, I have no doubt. But the latter are certainly calamitous, beyond any thing I ever witnessed. Some of the subjects of these revivals, and others who have been present in them, are scattered over the country far from those scenes of operation. The tidings of the means used are told by those who have never witnessed a revival in any other form. Now, these means are very simple, and just such as every body can use, male and female. Who cannot call his minister stupid and dead, and pray for him by name as such? And if he gets mad, and all the church too, no matter for that; "the more opposition the better." This is certainly the way to have a revival; for it is Mr. Finney's method: And

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[3] Lyman Beecher, Autobiography, II, pp. 94-95.

> he has the sanction of such men as Mr. Lansing and Aikin, and others. They did not believe in such measures at first; but they have been broken down.[4]

Nettleton made it clear that he believed that the rights of settled pastors had been infringed upon by rash itinerants, and that the stated ministry could not tolerate this meddling. He saw that these western innovations would, ultimately, destroy the order and unity of the church. Although he was wrongly informed about Finney's actual practice, he was doubtless correct in his stand against the rash imitators of Finney. "There is another method of conducting revivals, which may avoid these difficulties," he declared.

> Settled Pastors occupy nearly the whole field of operation. They have, and ought to have, the entire management in their own congregation. Each one has a right to pursue his own measures, within his own limits; and no itinerant has any business to interfere or dictate. It will ever be regarded as intermeddling in other men's matters. If they do not choose to invite me into their field, my business is meekly and silently to retire. And I have no right to complain. But many young men are continually violating the rules of ministerial order and Christian propriety in these respects.[5]

But Nettleton was concerned not only with ministerial order, he believed that the honor of God was being abused by the manner of prayer adopted by the western evangelists. He rang the changes upon Finney's sermon, "How Can Two Walk Together Except They Be Agreed?":

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[4] Asahel Nettleton to the Rev. Mr. Aikin, January 13, 1827, in Letters of the Rev. Dr. Beecher and Rev. Mr. Nettleton, on the "new measures" in conducting revivals on religion (New York: G & C Carvill, 1828), p. 14.

[5] Ibid., pp. 19-20.

> On reading the sermon in question, I was reminded of the repeated complaints which for some time past I have heard from the most judicious, experienced, and best revival ministers in the West; the substance of which is as follows: "There are various errors in the mode of conducting revivals in this region, which ought to be distinctly pointed out. That on the prayer of faith. This talking to God as a man talks to his neighbour, is truly shocking--telling the Lord a long story about A. or B., and apparently with no other intent than to produce a kind of stage effect upon the individual in question, or upon the audience generally. This mouthing of words; those deep and hollow tones, all indicative that the person is speaking into the ears of man, and not to God. I say nothing of the nature of the petitions often presented; but *the awful irreverence of the manner*! How strange that good men should so far forget themselves, as evidently to play tricks in the presence of the great God."[6]

Nettleton represented the New England response to the rough and adolescent verve of the western spirit to which he could not accommodate.

The Nettleton correspondence on the new measures was an important factor in the calling of the New Lebanon Convention, yet he himself did not participate in the meeting. He wrote to his brethren of New England giving some of his reasons for not attending the Lebanon Convention of 1827. He spoke of his feeble health and declared, "I have been compelled by ministers to talk and exhaust all my strength, and to spend nearly all my time, for about eight months, on this subject.

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[6] *Ibid.*, May 4, 1827, p. 35.

I have done all that I can; and have been greatly blamed by many for what I have done."[7] He indicated that he had no knowledge of who had been invited to the convention, and wished that those who had convoked the meeting had made the matter less public. "The convention may now be considered as having taken the same business into their own hands," he wrote, "and as having made public, what I have long been wishing to settle as silently as possible: hence I ought to be excused."[8] There is no doubt that he continued to feel a personal opposition to Finney; and as Finney's star rose his own became eclipsed. "The plea of Mr. Finney," he wrote, "that he wished to sit at my feet and learn, I believe was an after-device to justify himself in not correcting any thing. No complaint was ever hinted at the time. Indeed, after my last interview with Mr. Finney, the friends of the new measures continued to report that N. and F. are one; and this report continued in circulation until my letter to Aikin could be concealed no longer."[9] "Finally," he concluded, "To prevent misunderstanding, I am willing that my friends should attend, and do all in their power to prevent the evils feared. But I have no evidence that the principles on which these men acted are in the least altered. On the contrary, I shall be disappointed if they do not attempt to vindicate them, and justify all they have done."[10]

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[7] Ibid., July 12, 1827, p. 102.

[8] Ibid., p. 103.

[9] Ibid.

Nettleton continued his evangelistic work, but his preaching no longer achieved the old results in the era of the new measures. What he had been to the churches, however, was not forgotten, as one may witness in the letters to William B. Sprague which the author included in the appendix to his Lectures on Revivals, published in 1832.[11]

2. The Response of Beecher

Lyman Beecher (1775-1863), like Finney, was a Connecticut Yankee whose auspicious career was marked with conflict. Raised on a farm, educated in the "standing order" of Federalism and Calvinism, he was trained for the Ministry. His rural upbringing was exchanged for the urban life of a city pastor, his theocratic affinities were disrupted by the election of Jefferson and the disestablishment of the Congregational Church in Connecticut, and his Calvinism was modified into a New School theology. His dynamic disposition made him the champion of causes, which he pursued with pugnacious zeal. In 1804 he challenged the "code of honor" which had permitted the fateful duel between Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr, and achieved a solemn condemnation of the practice of dueling.[12] By the time of the 1820's, he had become one of America's most famous clergymen, standing at the forefront of the crusade against Unitarianism. When he became pastor of the Hanover Congregational Church in Boston, in 1826, he was the energetic leader of New England revivals and voluntary societies. Anxious to maintain the bonds of evangelical unity, he deplored the noise and fury being raised over the Western revivals; it was his voice, along with Beman's, that called the New Lebanon Convention.

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[10] *Ibid.*, p. 104.

[11] For example, cf. Letter V, from the Reverend Alvan Hyde, D.D., Pastor of a Congregational Church in Lee, Mass., March 22, 1832; and Letter VIII, from the Reverend Noah Porter, D.D., Pastor of a Congregational Church in Farmington, Conn., March 12, 1832, in the *Appendix*, William B. Sprague, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion* (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1959), first published in 1832.

Beecher's letters on the "new measures" were considerably more irenic than Nettleton's, but they were firm. His letter to N.S.S. Beman manifested his concern for the unity of the church and ministry which he felt was threatened by the innovations of Finney. He wrote:

> Indeed from the principles contained in Mr. Finney's Sermon, and from what I know concerning revivals which have taken place under his immediate auspices, I am sure that the "new measures," as they are justly called, though not unattended with some good, do nevertheless

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[12] E. H. Gillett, op. cit., I, p. 452.

> introduce into revivals another spirit, of whose nature and general influence those who countenance these measures seem not to be aware.
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> It is a spirit of fanaticism, of spiritual pride, censoriousness, and insubordination to the order of the Gospel, which if not met by the timely and decided disapprobation of ministers and churches, threatens to become one of the greatest evils which is likely to befall the cause of Christ.[13]

In a long letter to Nettleton, Beecher gave expression to his disappointment over the Western revivals, which he had hoped would be "the beginning of a new era in revivals, in respect to rapidity and universality." "I had begun to anticipate as the result," he wrote, "such a power of moral sentiment in the West, as, in alliance with New-England and other parts of the church, might ere long raise a rampart around the sabbath, and check the burning tide of intemperance, and the progress of heresy and error."[14] Further, he showed an appreciation of Finney which was not calculated to soothe Nettleton's distressed spirit.

> I have confidence in the piety and talents of brother Finney, and have no doubt that he brings the truth of God to bear upon the conscience with uncommon power, and in a manner highly calculated to arouse the public mind, and awaken, and convince of sin. I am aware too, that ministers and churches in their ordinary state, compared with the spirit of a revival, are de-

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[13] Lyman Beecher to N.S.S. Beman, December 15, 1827, in Letters of the Rev. Dr. Beecher and Rev. Mr. Nettleton, on the "new measures" . . ., p. 80.

[14] Lyman Beecher to Nettleton, January, 1827, op. cit., p. 81.

> plorably lukewarm, and often need strong measures, to bring them up to the point of even prudent zeal, and such as is indispensable to a powerful work of divine grace. I also fully believe, that means adequate to this end, though ever so prudently applied, must be such as sometimes will offend hypocrites and cold hearted professors, who are not reclaimed by them.[15]

Such a kinship with Finney was not to be expressed again until 1831, when he invited him to Boston.

Nevertheless, he criticized the "severe and repelling mode of preaching and conversing with stupid and awakened sinners."[16] He challenged the innovation of "female prayer in promiscuous assemblies," as being non-scriptural and contrary to the female character, which is "a softness and delicacy of feeling which shrinks from the notoriety of a public performance."[17] He declared himself against "bold, or imprudent expressions in the ardour of preaching, or under the provocation of opposition, or in the delirious exultation of spiritual pride"; and against "language of unbecoming familiarity with God in prayer."[18] All "coarse, blunt, and vulgar expressions" were thought to indicate a lack of "that delicacy of feeling, which, next to conscience and piety, is our greatest safeguard against impropriety."[19] Also, he spoke against "a harsh and severe mode of addressing sinners." "Whatever language a man uses," he wisely noted, "it tends to beget in him the style of feeling of which it is characteristic."[20] One cannot help but feel that the New England response in 1827 to the Western revivals was more stimulated by the crudeness, and impropriety, of certain "new measures" than by the general theological perspective represented. Bad manners could disrupt the church as quickly as poor theology.

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[15] Ibid., pp. 81-82.

[16] Ibid., p. 84.

[17] Ibid., p. 90.

[18] Ibid., p. 91.

[19] Ibid.

The Hopkinsian theology of Nathaniel Emmons (1745-1840) was becoming a relic of the past in 1827, and the old-fashioned Calvinism of Asahel Nettleton suffered a fatal blow in its conflict with the more virile Arminianized theology of the Western revivalists. However, it was not Calvinism which the New England divines were anxious about so much as, using Beecher's repeated phrase, the lack of "that delicacy of feeling" which is "our greatest safeguard against impropriety." Finney had a canny respect for the "higher classes of society," and frequently mused upon the class-response to revivals in the churches. Reflecting upon the Rochester Revival in 1855, in the light of previous revivals, he observed: "What was quite remarkable in the three revivals that I have witnessed in Rochester, they all commenced and made their first progress among the higher classes of society. This was very favorable to the general spread of the work, and to the overcoming of opposition."[21] By way of contrast, he turned to the New England response to his ministry:

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[20] Ibid., p. 92.

> I have labored in other cities where the people were even more highly educated than in Rochester. But in those cities the views and habits of the people were more stereotyped; the people were more fastidious, more afraid of measures than in Rochester. In New England I have found a high degree of general education, but a timidity, a stiffness, a formality, and a stereotyped way of doing things, that has rendered it impossible for the Holy Spirit to work with freedom and power.[22]

What Nettleton interpreted as disorder, and Beecher as a lack of delicacy of feeling, Finney understood to be freedom and openness to the influences of the Holy Spirit. There was a touch of romanticism in Finney's frontier spirit which clashed with the "standing order" mentality of New England. He thought their cultural patterns were too firmly set, and told them so. His argument had traces of sociological insight which he followed to the very brink of ultraism:

> Indeed wrong ideas of what constitutes disorder, are very prevalent. Most churches call anything disorder to which they have not been accustomed. Their stereotyped ways are God's order in their view, and whatever differs from these is disorder and shocks their ideas of propriety. But in fact nothing is disorder that simply meets the necessities of the people. In religion as in anything else, good sense and a sound discretion will, from time to time, judiciously, adapt

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21. Finney, Memoirs, p. 437.

22. Ibid., p. 439.

> means to ends. The measures needed will be naturally suggested to those who witness the state of things, and if prayerfully and cautiously used, let great freedom be given to the influences of the Holy Spirit in all hearts.[23]

It is doubtful if Finney ever realized that his argument, in the hands of less prudent men, was truly dangerous to the well-being of the church and ministry.

B. The Churchly Response: Nevih

1. Nevin's Response to the Anxious Bench

From the theological citadel of the German Reformed Church, at Mercersburg, Pennsylvania, John Williamson Nevin (1803-1886) thundered against the new measures in revivals. Nevin was not a stranger to the Presbyterian Church, for he had been reared in a strict, Scotch-Irish, Presbyterian family. After attending Union College he entered Princeton Theological Seminary in 1823; and, after finishing the course at Princeton, he substituted for Charles Hodge, in 1828, while that distinguished professor was in Germany. From 1830 to 1840 he was Professor of Biblical Literature at Western Theological Seminary. During the strife which led to schism in 1837, Nevin's theological sympathies were with the Old

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[23] Ibid., p. 440.

School.[24] In the years 1837 to 1840 he became involved in an abortive venture into slavery and temperance reform which served mainly to tangle his lines in the Presbyterian Church. In 1840 he accepted a call to the theological faculty at Mercersburg, where he was received into the German Reformed Church. There he began his attack upon "the blind mummery of new measures."[25]

Nevin's response to Finneyite revivalism was informed by a view of the church and ministry which began to take shape during the years at Western. There he discovered Neander, a student of Schleiermacher, who saw church history as the divine life invading humanity, and the Tractarians, whose churchly spirit was reforming large segments of the Anglican Church. Imbibing of these refreshing streams led him to new Christological foundations, deeply romantic and churchly, which carried him a far piece from his inheritance in the Puritan tradition, and further still from the unchurchliness and subjectivism of the revivalists. In 1843 he published The Anxious Bench, which successfully united the opinion of the Reformed Church in stubborn resistance against the inroads of revivalism.

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[24] Cf. Kenneth M. Plummer, "The Theology of John Williamson Nevin In the Mercersburg Period, 1840-1852" (typed Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1958), pp. 8-12.

[25] Ibid., p. 68.

First, Nevin brought under criticism some of the favorite arguments for the Anxious Bench, as it stood for the whole complex of new measures. To argue for the Anxious Bench "from its immediate visible effects," is to take for granted that they are all that they claim to be. "It is a marvellous credulity," he asserted, "to take every excitement in the name of religion, for the work of God's Spirit."[26] Even if the Anxious Bench should be connected with a genuine revival, Nevin believed that it could be said that the revival prevailed "in spite of the new measures with which it [was] encumbered."[27] It is argued, "that if only some souls are saved by the use of new measures, we ought thankfully to own their power, and give them our countenance; since even one soul is worth more than a world."[28] Nevin answered that "the salvation of a sinner may notwithstanding cost too much!" If truth and righteousness are made to suffer, if wrong is done, then more may be lost than gained; for if one is gained then ten may be lost by the very process employed.[29]

Again, it is argued that old forms are liable to become abused and ineffective. Admitting the point, Nevin went on to show that this same argument might be used against the new measures. "They propose to rouse the Church from its dead formalism. And to do this effectually," he noted, "they strike off from the old ways of worship, and bring in new and strange practices, that are adapted to excite attention." The "theatrical effect" of this is taken for an evidence of revival in the congregation. However, as one measure loses its power, as it becomes familiar, another is introduced to the same end.[30] Ultimately, Nevin believed that the new measures were self-defeating.

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[26] John W. Nevin, The Anxious Bench (Chambersburg, Pa.: Printed at the Office of the "Weekly Messenger," 1843), p. 12.

[27] Ibid., p. 13.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid.

It was Nevin's firm conviction that a ministry that needed new measures to enlist attention or produce effect in the work of the gospel was a ministry without "inward spiritual force." "If it be true that old forms are dead and powerless in a minister's hands," he asserted, "the fault is not in the forms, but in the minister himself . . . ."[31] "Let the power of religion be present in the soul of him who is called to serve at the altar," he concluded, "and no strange fire will be needed to kindle the sacrifice."[32]

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30. Ibid., p. 21.

31. Ibid., p. 22.

32. Ibid.

Turning his attention to the itinerant revivalist, he delivered a scathing rebuke:

> A man may be mighty in the use of new measures, preaching every day if need be for three weeks to crowded congregations, excited all the time; he may have the anxious bench filled at the close of each service, and the whole house thrown into disorder; he may have groaning, shouting, clapping, screaming, a very bedlam of passion, all around the altar; and as the result of all, he may be able to report a hundred converts or more, translated by the process, according to his own account, from darkness into God's marvellous light. He may be able to act the same part in similar scenes, at different places, in the course of a winter; and, for the time being, his name may be familiar to the lips of men, as a _revivalist_, whose citizenship might be supposed to hold in the third heaven. All this _may_ be, where to an attentive observer it shall soon be painfully evident, at the same time, that the true and proper strength of a man of God are wholly wanting. A man may so distinguish himself, and yet have no power to study, think or teach. He may be crude, chaotic, without cultivation or discipline. He may be too lazy to read or write.[33]

Such a rebuke might be applied to Finney only as a cruel caricature, but it was altogether applicable to many who followed his lead.

Further arguments against the Anxious Bench underlined the point that this practice created a false issue for the conscience of the awakened sinner. Nevin believed that the chief question was, will he repent and yield his heart to God, or not? To ask a sinner, pondering this question, to come forward to a particular seat, as a token of his anxiety, is to divert his attention to another issue. In this case, the issue becomes not will he give his heart to God, but will he go to the anxious seat. Nevin believed that this obscured the proper question and thrust it out of mind.[34] Also, manifesting a keener sense of the proper ordering of the service, Nevin commented on the disrupting tendencies of the new measures. He believed it quite impossible to introduce these measures without confusion and commotion. "Some appear to think," he noted, "that there is no disorder at such times unless it comes to loud noise and gross confusion, in the style of the Methodists. But the proper order of the sanctuary may be seriously unsettled, long before it has gone so far as this."[35] And if the system of new measures is introduced, there is no stopping place; and from the Anxious Bench the scheme moves on to the worst excesses.[36]

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[33] _Ibid_., pp. 24-25.

Against the new measures, Nevin advocated the tried and true means of a churchly ministry:

> A ministry apt to teach; sermons full of unction and light; faithful systematic instruction; zeal for the interests of holiness; pastoral visitation; catechetical training; due attention to order and discipline; patient perseverance in the details of the ministerial work; these are the agencies by which alone the kingdom of God may be expected to go steadily forward among any people.[37]

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[34] Ibid., p. 30.

[35] Ibid., p. 49.

[36] Ibid., p. 51.

[37] Ibid., p. 55.

Such a view of the ministry was sustained by the Mercersburg Theology, chiefly the work of Nevin and Philip Schaff, which centered in a high view of Christology, the Church, and the sacraments.[38]

2. Nevin's View of the Church

The Mercersburg Theology was a protest against the incompleteness of the prevailing systems; the pietistic revivalistic tradition and puritan tradition on the one hand, and the Roman tradition on the other. The one emphasized the subjective and experimental in religion, neglecting the sacramental and the objective elements; the other reversed the emphasis, ignoring the personal element in religion. The Mercersburg Theology held that the fundamental error in both traditions was a defective Christology. The lack of a proper conception of the Incarnation led to a truncated view of the Church, in which the organic unity of the natural and the supernatural in a new creation continuing in the historical form of the holy, Catholic Church was dismissed.

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[38] The Mercersburg Theology is discussed in the following works: Kenneth M. Plummer, *op. cit.*; Theodore Appel, *Life and Work of John W. Nevin* (Philadelphia, 1889); Luther J. Binkley, The Mercersburg Theology (Lancaster, Pa., 1953); James Hastings Nichols, *Romanticism in American Theology; Nevin and Schaff at Mercersburg* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961).

"The Ideal Church," wrote Nevin, "is the power of a new supernatural creation, which has been introduced into the actual history of the world by the incarnation of Jesus Christ . . . . The principle of this new creation is the Lord Jesus Christ." All the resources of life and salvation are deposited in the Church from the fulness of Christ, "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." The Church is "the necessary and only form in which Christianity can have a real existence in the world." It requires a visible externalization in the world; indeed, "Its catholicity, unity, sanctity, all call for externalization." Therefore, there is the "Actual Church," which is exhibited in history from the time of the incarnation. It is the kingdom of heaven revealing itself in actual life of men as a process. "Thus we have the Church of the present age," wrote Nevin, "comprehending in itself the whole extent of the Christian life as it now exists in the world." For Nevin the historical Church is always the true Church, but it is never a pure or perfect Church. Nevertheless, with all their differences, the actual and the ideal Church are the same.[39]

In The Mystical Presence Nevin argued that, in addition to a defective Christology, there was a serious deficiency in the general Protestant view of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. The defection from original Protestant orthodoxy in this matter had resulted in a loss of the "true idea of the Church." For Nevin the Eucharist could not be relegated to a secondary concern in theology; it must be placed at the center of Christian life and thought. In the 1840's the following statement must have seemed quite odd to both the puritan and the revivalist parties.

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[39] The above quotations are from John W. Nevin, The Church, A Sermon preached at the opening of the Synod of the German Reformed Church at Carlisle, October 15, 1846 (Chambersburg, Pa., 1847).

> As the Eucharist forms the very heart of the whole Christian worship, so it is clear that the entire question of the Church, which all are compelled to acknowledge, the great life-problem of the age, centres ultimately in the sacramental question as its inmost heart and core. Our view of the Lord's Supper must ever condition and rule in the end our view of Christ's person and the conception we form of the Church. It must influence at the same time, very materially, our whole system of theology, as well as all our ideas of ecclesiastical history.[40]

In fact, affirming the nature of the Church as an objective reality bearing within it the means of grace necessary for man's salvation, Nevin had identified himself with the right wing, the classical side, of the Reformation. In this position he decisively rejected the pietism and revivalism of the Finneyite movement; also, he found himself radically opposed to the rationalistic modes of thought which informed the Protestant scholasticism of Princeton and much of the Puritan tradition.

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[40] John W. Nevin, The Mystical Presence (Philadelphia, Pa.: S. R. Fisher and Co., 1847), p. 3.

Likewise, Nevin affirmed a view of the nature of the ministry which was much more "priestly" than the revivalist or Princeton view. A typical statement of his view is this one from his sermon, "The Church."

> The ministry for instance is far more than any merely human institution could ever be possibly under this form. The office is a necessary organ of the body of Christ, and as such it is the bearer of a divine supernatural power. . . . Ordination does convey, in this sense, objective virtue or force, such as no man, in the ordinary course of things, can be allowed to possess without it. So all ministerial functions are as such of more force, than any common human transactions bearing a similar form. . . . The Church has power to bind and loose upon the earth. The regular functions of the ministry are divine functions. Church censures and church absolutions too, take hold upon the invisible world. Church services involve the force of a true liturgical sacrifice, which serves of itself to bring men near to God. The sacraments in particular have living power in themselves.[41]

To deny this view of the ministry, says Nevin, is to deny the fact of the incarnation and its implications for the Church.

> If there be no supernatural force in the ministry and sacraments for their own ends, it is plain that the entire objective character of the Church, and with this its true historical character, and at last its character as a real divine constitution, the "Body of Christ" in the world, must virtually fall to the ground at the same time.[42]

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[41] Nevin, "The Church," p. 25.

[42] *Ibid*.

Finney seems to have disregarded Nevin's work altogether, but Hodge found himself in complete disagreement with Nevin on both the true doctrine of the Reformed Church, and on the historical issues involved.[43] However, both Nevin and Hodge rejected the pietistic and revivalistic view of the church and ministry defined by Finney.

C. The Churchly Response: Hodge

1. The Spokesman for Princeton

Charles Hodge (1797-1878) was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and early brought under the influence of the Christian faith. The church of his youth was the Second Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia, founded by George Whitefield and Gilbert Tennent during the 18th century revivals. He matriculated at the College of New Jersey at the age of fourteen years, and during his first year was extremely interested in the installation of Archibald Alexander as the first professor of the new Theological Seminary at Princeton. His interest in the seminary continued, and after graduation from the College of New Jersey he became a theological student. A brilliant student, upon graduation from Princeton Theological Seminary he was chosen to become a teacher by his mentor,

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[43] Cf. Plummer, op. cit., pp. 268-270.

Alexander. For the rest of his life he labored for Princeton and the welfare of the Presbyterian Church, becoming one of its most distinguished scholars.

The young Hodge felt himself inadequately prepared to undertake the responsibilities of teaching in the field of Biblical Literature without further studies in linguistics. He took leave to study abroad during the years 1826-1828; most of this time was spent in Germany. There he became friends with such theological luminaries as August Tholuck, Johann Neander, and Ernest Hengstenberg, among others. On his return trip to Princeton he spent a week in Scotland. It is a strange anomaly that Hodge had such warm, personal friendships with German theological scholars, such brief and anonymous contact with the Scottish theological scene, and no contact with Ireland, yet his Princeton years manifested little influence, or interest, generated from the German theological movements. He was only enamoured with the Scottish and Scotch-Irish milieux.[44] In contrast, Nevin, a student of Hodge, became thoroughly impressed in his reading of the German authors and developed his theological thought in their light. Hodge was in welcome captivity of the Scottish influence at Princeton, established in the College by Witherspoon, and continued in the Seminary by Alexander.

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[44] Cf. A. A. Hodge, The Biography of Charles Hodge (New York, 1880), passim; and, Leonard J. Trinterud, "Charles Hodge, Theology--Didactic and Polemical," in Hugh T. Kerr (ed.), Sons of the Prophets, Leaders in Protestantism from Princeton Seminary (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1963), pp.23-38.

Returning to Princeton Seminary in the fall of 1828, Hodge was almost immediately caught up into the controversy concerning the threat of popular revivalistic religion to decency and order in the Church. Hodge wielded his sword against Finney on more than one occasion in defense of Princeton's conservatism. As the tension between the Old School party and the revivalists grew, the ground of the controversy shifted from the fitness of the new measures to the theology which supported them. Soon both issues were over-shadowed by the storm clouds of the struggle over slavery. Hodge, and the other Princeton theologians, were doubtless Old School in their theological affinities; but Hodge attempted to keep the seminary in such a position as to afford a mediating influence in the Old School-New School controversies. As a matter of fact, Hodge opposed schism in the church before 1837; but he later became the great defender of the Old School party and denomination.[45] Unfortunately, Hodge was confined by illness to his home from 1833 to 1838 and seminary policy was influenced primarily by Alexander and Miller.[46]

In 1825 an "association of gentlemen" in and about Princeton founded a quarterly journal called the Biblical Repertory

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[45] Trinterud, op. cit., p. 31.

[46] Ibid.

(later the Princeton Review) which heralded the Princeton line. Hodge became the most frequent, and respected, contributor to this journal, but not the formulator of its policy until after 1840. Hodge was grimly opposed to the growing power of the voluntary societies, especially those active in the abolition crusade. In 1836 he published in the Biblical Repertory what was to become his most notorious article, a long book review on the issue of slavery. He argued that slavery, as an institution, was accepted in the Bible and that only the abuse of slaves was to be condemned. The article was extremely anti-abolitionist and showed no knowledge of the personal deprivation inflicted upon the southern slave. This article was reprinted several times and became a hammer which both sides of the slavery issue attempted to use to shape their arguments upon the anvil of discord.

Illness prevented Hodge from attending the Assembly of 1837, and the schism he so much feared became a reality. Unable, of course, to side with the New School Church he became the ardent defender of the Old School Presbyterian Church. In 1840 he became the Professor of Apologetical and Polemical Theology and, as the older men became inactive, he became the central figure of Princeton and of the Old School Church. He continued to oppose the New School and agitated against the move toward reunion following the Civil War. On this account his influence in the reunited church might have lessened had not the publishing of his three volumes of Systematic Theology (1871-1873) lifted him to an unimpeachable status. Hodge was, without a doubt, one of the best informed theologians American Presbyterianism possessed in the mid-nineteenth century. He was well-versed in Biblical scholarship, the history of doctrine, and, to a lesser degree, philosophical theology. His Systematic Theology remains a benchmark in American theology despite the fact that he did not treat the doctrine of the church and ministry within that work.[47] Indeed, through the years Charles Hodge became the spokesman for Princeton.

2. The Princeton Theology and the View of the Church

Charles Hodge was not averse to revivalism of all types; for he had been nurtured in the Christian faith in a Philadelphia congregation established and imbued with the tradition of the Great Awakening. Also, he had observed with interest the revivals taking place in Germany which frequently exhibited "bodily exercises" similar to those in American revivals. There was a trace of pietism in his warmly personal, and evangelical faith, but it was always restrained by the rationalism of his Protestant scholasticism. However, his commitment to a constitutional view of the church and ministry caused him to be zealously opposed to the disrupting influences of the "new measures." For this reason he vigorously supported Albert Dod's blast against Finney in those reviews of the *Lectures on Revivals of Religion* and *Sermons on Various Subjects*, in the *Biblical Repertory*, which have already been discussed. It will be remembered that these reviews called for Finney to leave the church.

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[47] Hodge was well aware of this deficiency and planned a fourth volume to discuss Ecclesiology. Due to the infirmities of age he was unable to fulfill this plan. However, the Rev. William Durant, an enthusiastic pupil of Charles Hodge, selected and arranged the vast array of articles on Ecclesiology which filled the pages of the Princeton Review from 1835 to 1867. With the approval of Charles Hodge, and the assistance of his son A. A. Hodge, The Church and Its Polity was published (1878, 1879).

When Hodge took the chair of theology at Princeton in 1840, Finney and Asa Mahan were broadcasting their views on sanctification from Oberlin. The radical perfectionism of the Oberlin theology became a stone of stumbling, even among many who supported Finney on other grounds. When Finney published his two volumes of *Systematic Theology*, in 1846 and 1847, Charles Hodge saw an opportunity to gain advantage for the Old School Presbyterians. He wrote a review of this work, in the *Biblical Repertory* for June, 1847, in which he attempted to build upon the growing opposition to Oberlin Perfectionism. The review lauded Finney's logical power, but argued that his theology was a complete *reductio ad absurdum* of the whole New School system.[48] About this same time, Professor Woods, of Andover, published a courteous review in which he nevertheless thoroughly condemned the Systematic Theology of Finney. George Duffield, a prominent New School pastor in Detroit, Michigan, followed the attack of Hodge with a pamphlet entitled "A Warning Against Error," in October of 1847, in which he endeavored to show that Finney's theology was not the necessary outgrowth of the fundamental principles of the New School Church.[49]

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[48] Hodge wrote: "The work is therefore in a high degree logical. It is as hard to read as Euclid. Nothing can be omitted; nothing passed over slightly. The unhappy reader once committed to a perusal is obliged to go on, sentence by sentence, through the long concatenation. There is not one resting place: not one lapse into amplification or declamation, from the beginning to the close. It is like one of those spiral staircases, which lead to the top of some high tower without a landing from the base to the summit; which, if a man has once ascended, he resolves never to do the like again. The author begins with certain postulates, or what he calls first truths of reason, and these he traces out with singular clearness and strength to their legitimate conclusions. We do not see that there is a break or a defective link in the whole chain. If you grant his principles, you have already granted his conclusions." Cf. Charles G. Finney, "An Examination . . . Of The Review Of Finney's Systematic Theology Published in the 'Biblical Repertory,' Princeton, N.J., June, 1847," Lectures on Systematic Theology, Edited and Revised by Rev. Geo. Redford, (London: William Tegg & Co., 1851), Appendix p. 917.

[49] Later published with the formal approval of the Synod of Michigan: George Duffield, The Theology of Professor Finney Reviewed and Put to the Test of the Sacred Scriptures (Detroit: Garrett & Geiger, 1849).

Thus we see that Finney's theology was being attacked on all sides: by New England divines, New School and Old School partisans. He made extensive replies to Hodge and Duffield in the Oberlin Quarterly Review, and there were frequent comments in the Oberlin Evangelist upon the "backward track" which New School men were taking in order to avoid being associated with Oberlin Perfectionism.[50] The radicalism of Finney in the midst of revivals, which brought to him both commendation and blame, was first acted out in the revivals of western New York, then thought out in the Lectures on Revivals of Religion. His reputation in 1835, the year the Lectures on Revivals of Religion was published, continued on a rising scale. However, when he began to expound his perfectionist views at the Broadway Tabernacle, in 1836, the way was prepared for the peculiar developments which were to take place

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[50] In response to Duffield, Finney wrote: "The following I hold to be conditions of pardon and acceptance, or of gospel justification in the sense just explained, that is, not in the sense of the ground or foundation of justification, but in the sense that justification cannot take place where these are wanting. Men are not justified for these things, but they cannot be justified without them. I regard this distinction as fundamental. I regard and teach the following as conditions, but not as the ground, of justification. 1. The atonement of Christ; 2. Repentance; 3. Faith in the atonement; 4. Sanctification, or such repentance and faith as imply present obedience to God, or present entire consecration to him. I make a distinction between present, and continued, and final justification." Cf. Finney, "A Reply to 'Warning Against . . . Error,'" in Lectures on Systematic Theology (1851 edition), Appendix, p. 983.

in the Oberlin Theology during the next decade. By 1847 Finney had alienated himself from most segments of the more churchly thinkers in America.[51]

In the 1850's Hodge was sailing under full steam against the voluntary societies which had disrupted the province of the church. He believed that these societies were particularly adaptable, if not implicit, in the New England view of the Church; so he attacked them both together. He represented the New England view of the visible church as "a purely spiritual body, consisting of the regenerated, united by special covenant for the worship of God, and mutual watch and care."[52] "No one, therefore," he wrote, "is a member of the Church but one, who giving satisfactory evidence of regeneration, voluntarily and personally professes his faith, and enters into a Church covenant with a number of fellow-believers."[53] Hodge reasoned that in this scheme the sole object of Church organization becomes the provision for divine worship and the exercise of discipline over its members. The effect of this design was utter inefficiency in community action. "Who ever heard of the Church saying or doing anything in New England?" Hodge exclaimed, "It is muzzled, manacled and fettered."[54] Because they have no means for organic action, it became necessary to go outside of the Church organization to do anything "however intimately connectied with Christ's kingdom."[55] For this reason the voluntary societies answered a vital need, as agencies through which the churches in the midst of revivals could act in, and upon, society. "We give full credit to the devotion of individual Christians in New England," asserted Hodge, "and to the energy of their combined action in their voluntary associations of different kinds. But these are very poor substitutes for the natural and divinely appointed organs of Church action . Experience is teaching a sad lesson on this subject."[56] Because Hodge believed that the Church was not designed merely to order the public worship and exercise discipline, although these tasks have high and sacred priority, because the great prerogative and duty of the Church is "to assert, maintain, and propagate the truth,"--for these reasons the Church must have properly constituted boards and agencies to carry out the total mission of the Church.[57] Presbyterians may not suffer the voluntary societies to assume authority in areas which are the necessary province of the Church. With painful severity Hodge promoted the weeding of the tares from the field of the Church.

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[51] Note also: in 1845 Finney published his Letters on Revivals, which first appeared in the Oberlin Evangelist. Here he expressed concern for the future of revivalism, and offered some corrections and apologies with respect to his own role.

[52] Charles Hodge, The Church and Its Polity (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1879), p. 101.

[53] Ibid.

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[54] Ibid.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Ibid., pp. 101-102.

[57] Ibid., p. 103.

Hodge's high view of the Church also reflected a broader perspective on church membership. He strongly opposed all of the tests of piety internalized by the "ultraism" of Finney's popular pietism. "It seems strange to us," he mused, "that any one should contend that making the use or sale of intoxicating drinks as a beverage, is in itself a proof that a man is not a Christian, is not adopting 'a new term of communion.' If you establish a new test of piety, you certainly thereby establish a new term of communion."[58] That should have scandalized the Finneyites sufficiently, but he continued:

> If the fact that a man holds slaves, or that he sings Watts' psalms, or that he uses wine, is made to prove he is not a pious man, do you not, in the common and correct sense of the terms, make those things conditions of union with the Church? And is it not plain that by so doing you violate the Scriptures, place yourself above the Master, and undertake to prescribe rules for his house on your own authority and contrary to his will?[59]

The true idea of the Church, according to Hodge, must be centered in the "Communion of the Saints" of the Apostles'

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[58] Ibid., p. 230.

[59] Ibid.

Creed.[60] It was evident that the Creed did not set forth the Church as a visible society of one specific form, nor does it present the idea of an external society at all. He affirmed that saints may exist and have communion, and that the Church may continue under any external organization, or without any visible organization whatever.[61] In analyzing the meaning of "saint," he refuted any moralistic interpretation of the term. "When, therefore, it is said that the Church consists of saints," he wrote, "the meaning is not that it consists of all who are externally consecrated to God, irrespective of their moral character, but that it consists of true Christians or sincere believers."[62] The bond by which saints are united has to do with their justification, sanctification, and access to God; it can be nothing less than their relation to Christ.[63] The idea of the true Church is "the communion of saints, the body of those who are united to Christ by the indwelling of his Spirit."[64]

Hodge's historical analysis of the theories of the Church revealed three characteristic forms: the Evangelical, the

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[60] Ibid., p. 5.

[61] Ibid., p. 6.

[62] Ibid., pp. 6-7.

[63] Ibid., p. 7.

[64] Ibid.

Ritual, and the Rationalistic.[65] He believed that these three forms always co-exist in the Church, each striving for mastery. During the apostolic age the evangelical system prevailed in its constant conflict with the Ritualism of Judaism. In the following age Rationalism struggled for mastery under the form of Gnosticism, and the philosophy of the Platonizing fathers. Ritualism gained the ascendency until the Reformation, when the evangelical system was renewed. Evangelicalism was succeeded on the continent by Rationalism, and in England, under Archbishop Laud, by Ritualism. Evangelicalism began its ascendency again during the period of Wesley and Whitefield.

According to Hodge, the evangelical system starts with the principle that all men are sinners, and that the only method of salvation is by faith in Jesus Christ. All true believers are members of the true Church, and all professors of the true faith are thereby members of the visible Church. Hence, the only essential mark of a true Church is the profession of true religion.[66] The visibility of the Church is that which belongs to believers. "They are visible as men"; wrote Hodge, "as holy men; as men separated from the world, as a peculiar people, by the indwelling of the Spirit of God;

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[65] Ibid., p. 39.

[66] Ibid., p. 45; pp. 56f.

as the soul and sustaining element of all those external organizations, consisting of professors of the true religion, united for the worship of Christ, the maintenance of the truth, and mutual watch and care."[67]

Hodge was theologically committed to the position that the Church was the "Communion of the Saints," and that no one form of external organization was essential to the Church. At the same time, as has been shown in Hodge's analysis of the ineffectiveness of the New England Church, he held that the Church must be constitutionally organized to perform its mission in the world. He believed that a distinctive principle of the evangelical system related to the ministry.

In his discussion of the ministry Hodge followed the common teaching of the confessions of the Magisterial Reformation. There was no distinction between the clergy and laity as affirmed by the Roman Church. The universal priesthood assures that through Christ all have liberty of access by the Spirit unto the Father; consequently ministers are not priests intervening between the people and God. As the people are not dependent upon the clergy for grace and salvation, there is no vital question concerning a true succession and the grace of orders. All Church power is vested in the Church as a whole, and not in the clergy as a class. This is to say that the great commission by which the Church was constituted was addressed to the whole church. The power of the keys, therefore, is vested in the people; and they may not rightly divest themselves of this power and its responsibility.[68]

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[67] *Ibid.*, p. 62. Cf. also, p. 67.

This doctrine of the ministry does not imply that the ministry is not an office, as the Quakers teach; nor that it is not an office of divine appointment. It does not imply that any man may assume the office and undertake its functions without a proper call and ordination. Nor does it favor the theory of the Independents: which is that each congregation is independent of all others, and that the ministerial office is both given and withdrawn by the vote of the people. The function of the people is not to confer the office, but to judge whether a given person is called of God to be a minister, and whether he shall exercise his office over them as their pastor. Every office of the Church presupposes a gift, and that office is the organ through which the gift is exercised for the edification of the Church. In this sense, it is the inward call of the Holy Spirit which constitutes a minister; for herein lies the authority and ability to function in that office for the conversion of sinners and the edification of believers. This inward call must be authenti-

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68. Ibid., pp. 141-142.

cated, and the ordinary means is the judgment of the Church exercised through Presbytery and attested to by public ordination. Hodge allowed, also, for the extra-ordinary authentication which may manifest itself in such a measure of gifts, and such success in their use, as will place the fact of a divine call beyond all reasonable doubt.[69]

This is the system into which Charles G. Finney was directed upon his ordination in the Presbyterian Church. However, this confessional and constitutional view of the ministry was never as congenial to him as the New England Congregational view in its radical, Independent form. He never really became Presbyterianized. Certainly he agreed with Hodge concerning the significance of a divine call to the ministry, but the constitutional polity of the Presbyterian Church seemed insufficiently democratic. Also they agreed upon the principle that the ministry of the Word and Sacraments was a basic responsibility of the pastor. Their views on how this ministry was to be fulfilled differed, but both Hodge and Finney disagreed with the definitive role given to the sacraments in Nevin's Mercersburg Theology.

In 1855 Charles Hodge wrote an article for the Princeton Review entitled, "Presbyterian Liturgies," which found its proper place in The Church and Its Polity.[70] In this same year a minister of the Presbyterian Church in New York published a significant volume, EUTAXIA, or the Presbyterian Liturgies; Historical Sketches.[71] Both Baird and Hodge attempted to inform the Presbyterian Church concerning its Reformed liturgical tradition, without achieving the liturgical reform that followed Nevin's, The Mystical Presence (1847), in the German Reformed Church. Hodge argued that the use of liturgies in public worship was not "one of the peculiarities of prelatical Churches"; for the use of liturgies was introduced into all of the Protestant Churches at the time of the Reformation, and in most of them "they continue in use to the present day."[72] Unlike Nevin and Baird, and more akin to Finney, he asserted that "the theory of Presbyterianism is opposed to the use of liturgies."[73] He continued: "In the ideal state of the Church--in that state which our theory contemplates, where every minister is really called of God, and is the organ of the Holy Ghost in the exercise of his functions, liturgies would be fetters, which nothing but compulsion could induce any man to wear."[74] He believed that all forms were unavoidably inadequate, for the inward state and circumstances of any worshipping congregation are never the same. He considered the English liturgy to be too nearly identified with the Romish forms, and the rubrics for dress and ceremony to be open to many "conscientious objections."[75] Adopting the Scottish tradition, he listed with disdain the multitude of special services which marked the church calendar--"How foreign is all this to the simplicity of the gospel!"[76]

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[69] *Ibid.*, pp. 143-144.

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[70] Ibid., pp. 157ff.

[71] A London edition of this book, in 1856, bore the title, A Chapter on Liturgies. It has been reprinted: Charles W. Baird, The Presbyterian Liturgies, Historical Sketches (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1960).

[72] Charles Hodge, The Church and Its Polity, pp. 157, 158.

[73] Ibid., p. 158.

After a fulsome exhibition of all the reasons against a stated liturgy, he came to his point: "The extreme of insisting that certain forms should alone be used, begat the extreme of insisting that no forms should be allowed."[77] The solution to this problem, Hodge argued, was the safe middle ground of the optional use of a liturgy having the sanction of the Church. Such a liturgy should be compiled, and not written. The forms of Calvin and Knox for the various ordinances of the Church, in his judgment, would be "a very great blessing."[78] The abilities of ministers, with a view to the leading of public worship, vary so much that a service book would be welcome, especially for the celebration of the sacraments, for marriages and funerals. He believed that such a book would improve the conduct of public worship by ministers; and that it would provide a needed source for those many occasions in which public worship should be conducted and the dead buried, when no minister is at hand.

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[74] *Ibid.*

[75] *Ibid.*, p. 160.

[76] *Ibid.*

[77] *Ibid.*, p. 161.

[78] *Ibid.*, p. 162.

Hodge concluded his article with a guarded statement: "Let it be remembered, that we have not advocated the introduction of a liturgy, but simply the preparation of a book which may be used as the occasion calls for it."[79] Thus his view of liturgy, along with his doctrine of the church and ministry, identifies Hodge as moving with the high churchly tides of the mid-nineteenth century in America through the threatening shoals of popular revivalistic religion. The Princeton theological prism did not reflect a wide enough spectrum to include the *ultra* high church views of a Nevin, nor did it include the *infra* low church position of a Finney. The Church in the midst of revivals was striving for definition; Finney, Hodge, and Nevin represented three theological styles, each with their discernable roots and developments. But the theological style of Finney reflected the religious understanding and set the standards of America's ubiquitous religious scheme, evangelical revivalism. It would be only a slight exaggeration to say: if Hodge spoke for Princeton, and Nevin for Mercersburg, Finney spoke for the people of an adolescent America.

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[79] *Ibid.*, p. 167.

D. The Definitive View: Lectures on Revivals of Religion

1. A Spokesman for His Age

The Lectures on Revivals of Religion, first published as a book in 1835, has significance for the student of American church history because it portrays the unfolding patterns of religious, social, and intellectual development during the first half of the nineteenth century. On the religious side, Finney reflects the rejection of Calvinism and the acceptance of pietistic evangelicalism, which was the predominating religious mode of the American Church in the midst of the revivals of the Second Great Awakening (c. 1795-1835). On the social and intellectual side, his views represent much that was common to the Jacksonian Era, or the Era of the Common Man, as it is variously called. Indeed, Finney became the spokesman for that pietistic-evangelical-revivalistic synthesis which prevailed among the middle-class churchgoers of mid-nineteenth century America.[80]

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[80] Cf. William G. McLoughlin (ed.), "Introduction," Lectures on Revivals of Religion, by Charles Grandison Finney, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1960), p. vii.

Finney's articulation of the revivalistic view of the church and ministry was so centered in the heart of the popular culture that overnight it sold 12,000 copies in America. Soon it was translated into Welsh, French, and German, as well as being widely read in England. Not since Jonathan Edwards had a religious leader in America received such attention, and none was to do so until the meteoric rise of Dwight L. Moody.[81] John Keep wrote to Finney from England with a glowing report of the acceptance of his work there. "Finney's Lectures on Revivals are spreading far and wide in England, Scotland and Ireland. Soon the Oberlin Evangelist, or a selection from it, will go out over this whole kingdom."[82] He went on to argue the "inference" that the wide dissemination of Finney's book must be proof of its "truth." A better line might be argued; namely, that Finney's view of the church and ministry struck a responsive chord in evangelical-oriented minds everywhere.

In 1840 Finney received words of appreciation from ministers of Wales for the Lectures on Revivals. From an assembly of Congregational ministers in North Wales came the report:

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[81] Cf. Perry Miller, The Life of the Mind in America, From the Revolution to the Civil War (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1965), p. 9.

[82] John Keep to Finney, Mahan, and Henry Cowles, August 19, 1839, Finney Papers, OCL.

"Your work on Revivals has been translated into our native language, and under the blessing of God has been the means of rousing the dormant [energies] of our churches." After reporting the progress of revivals in North Wales, they continued: "We have also great pleasure in informing you that this happy state of things is to be attributed in a great measure to the reading of your works. This combined with the readings with which the Total Abstinence principle was received and acted upon both by Ministers and People, and the Zeal with which we engaged in its propagation is the means which under the Divine Blessing we believe to have been the cause of producing life, prosperity and joy in our Churches."[83] From the Annual Assembly of Independent Ministers in the counties of Carmarthen, Pembroke, and Cardigan, South Wales, was forwarded the following resolution:

> That the Chairman be requested to write to the Reverend Charles G. Finney of America, offering him the cordial thanks of this conference for the publication of his valuable 'Lectures on Revivals of Religion': and to state to him that those lectures have proved means, under the blessing of God, of awakening in the minds of many Ministers, and also in many Churches, a feeling which has led them to seek revivals of pure religion, in a more suitable manner than they had done before."[84]

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[83] Ministers of the Congregational Denomination in North Wales to Finney, February 27, 1840, Finney Papers, OCL.

[84] James Griffiths to Finney, July 13, 1840, Finney Papers, OCL.

Primarily a practical handbook on the theory and measures for stimulating revivals, the Lectures on Revivals of Religion contained the "point of view" concerning the church and ministry which remained with Finney throughout his life and thought, and which indelibly marked the evangelical pattern of religion in America. Here is found a view of the Church informed by the concept of disinterested benevolence, with conversion annexed to the voluntary societies for reform. Reform was associated with millennial hopes, which were more the product of the vibrant spirit of optimism and progress prevailing in that era, than of sober theological speculation. Throughout is found a virulent hostility to Calvinism, the Westminster Confession, and the polity of the Presbyterian Church. He attacked the traditional view of the nature of conversion and the promotion of revivals; he denounced the pessimistic attitude toward human nature and progress; and he remonstrated against the authoritarian, hierarchical organization of the Presbyterian Church. His "point of view" was revolutionary because it expressed not the classical theocentric and organic view of the church and ministry, but an anthropocentric and individualistic view that was far more congenial to the ethos of Jacksonian America.[85]

The doctrine of sanctification was emphasized in the

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[85] Cf. William G. McLoughlin (ed.), op. cit., p. ix.

Lectures on Revivals of Religion, but a fuller treatment of this theme was begun in Finney's lectures at the Broadway Tabernacle in 1836. The disrupting influence of Oberlin Perfectionism has already been indicated. Finney's ideas about public worship are scattered about here and there in the book, as are his ideas about the minister and his work. But both the ministry and the worship of the Church are centered in his succinct statement of the purpose of the ministry--"The end of the ministry, is the salvation of the soul."[86] It was for the education of such a ministry that Finney went to Oberlin.

As with other social and intellectual matters, Finney's attitudes about politics and economics were frequently interjected into the lectures as partial asides, at other times they came forth as dogmatic assertions. His political analysis seldom rose above the level of inquiring whether or not the candidate was a Christian. It did not seem to him important whether he was a Whig or a Democrat, "Bank or Anti-Bank," "Jackson, or Anti-Jackson." "They must let the world see," said Finney, "that the church will uphold no man in office, who is known to be a knave, or an adulterer, or a Sabbath-breaker, or a gambler."[87] In the realm of economics, Finney likewise manifested the limitations of an individualistic interpretation. He was far more concerned with the evils of indebtedness and the spiritual welfare of factory workers than with the social responsibilities of Christian businessmen, and of the Church, which were manifesting themselves during the early development of the Industrial Revolution.[88]

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[86] Ibid., p. 176.

[87] Ibid., p. 297.

2. An External History of the Lectures on Revivals

A brief survey of some of the external elements relating to the history of this publication will further identify its definitive role in American religious and intellectual history. The occasion of these lectures was the loss of subscribers by the New York Evangelist in 1834, due to an overdose of anti-slavery material in its pages administered by its editor, Joshua Leavitt. The New York Evangelist had been founded in 1830 to herald the progress of revivals, particularly those of Finney. Leavitt's imprudent action, repentance, and overture to Finney to "write a series of articles on revivals," has been described elsewhere in this thesis. It shall suffice here to mention that Finney agreed to deliver a series of lectures on revivals which Leavitt might take down and publish in the Evangelist. The first of these lectures appeared in the Evangelist, December 6, 1834, and continued as a regular series. The demand for back numbers of this weekly newspaper, so that readers might have a complete set of the lectures, was so great that it was decided to publish the series in book form. The Lectures on Revivals of Religion was published in May of 1835.[89]

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[88] For a thorough discussion of Finney's political and economic views, cf. William G. McLoughlin, Modern Revivalism; Charles Grandison Finney to Billy Graham (New York: Ronald Press Co., 1959), pp. 113ff.

The immense popularity of these lectures was associated with the tremendous vitality of the revival cycle which marked the culmination of the Second Great Awakening in 1835. Charles C. Cole, Jr., has reported that church membership increased from 365,000 in 1800 to about 1,875,000 in 1835; whereas the population increased from about 5,000,000 to 15,000,000.[90] In the next decade, Finney seems to have had some second thoughts on the direction that revivals were taking under the authority of his handbook, for in 1845-1846 he published a series of "Letters on Revivals" in the Oberlin Evangelist, in which he frankly acknowledged some of the shortcomings of his revival efforts. This is not to say that Finney repudiated his earlier work; rather, he bemoaned the fact that some overzealous and incompetent evangelists had abused his methods, while the regular ministers had been too involved in their ecclesiastical and social activities to provide a balance for these extremists. In 1868 Finney was asked to edit and revise an enlarged edition of his Lectures on Revivals. Looking back over the years, notwithstanding the "Letters on Revivals," he decided to reissue the edition of 1835 with only a few changes; he rewrote the last two chapters in a more amplified form, without changing the doctrinal content.[91]

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[89] Cf. William G. McLoughlin (ed), "Bibliographical Note on this Edition," op. cit., pp. lvi-lix; Leavitt's "Memorandum of an Agreement," in Joshua Leavitt to Finney, May 19, 1835, Finney Papers, OCL.

[90] Charles C. Cole, Jr., The Social Ideas of the Northern Evangelists, 1826-1860 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1954), p. 13.

Further testimony to the significance of Finney's Lectures on Revivals of Religion is found in the fact that it was chosen to be published in The John Harvard Library series by the Belknap Press of the Harvard University Library. This series was endowed for the purpose of "editing and publishing rare, inaccessible, or hitherto unpublished source material of interest in connection with the history, literature, art . . ., commerce, customs, and manners or way of life of the Colonial and Federal Periods of the United States . . ."[92] Again, Perry Miller makes Finney and his Lectures on Revivals of Religion central to his interpretation of "The Evangelical Basis" of the life of the mind in America.[93] It cannot be argued that Finney's was the only book on revivals in this period, for William B. Sprague's Lectures on Revivals of Religion (Albany, 1832) and Calvin Colton's History and Character of American Revivals (2nd ed., London, 1832) had a wide circulation and influence.[94] However, it can be argued that Finney's book is the definitive work for the understanding of the church and ministry in the midst of revivals.

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[91] William G. McLoughlin (ed.), op. cit., p. lii.

[92] Ibid., facing page to p. 470.

[93] Perry Miller, op. cit., pp. 3-98.

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[94] Sprague's book represents the moderate Old School point of view in opposition to the "new measures" of Finney. Finney's lectures may be interpreted, in part, as a rebuttal to Sprague's book. Colton attempted to justify American revivalism, against its many critics, but when he returned to America from England in 1836, he was so appalled by the havoc made in the churches by extremism in the use of measures that he left the Presbyterian Church to take orders in the Episcopal Church (cf. Perry Miller, op. cit., p. 29). There is some evidence that Finney may have been reading Colton's book before he delivered his lectures (cf. McLoughlin, op. cit., p. lix).

PART TWO. FINNEY'S VIEW OF THE CHURCH AND MINISTRY

V. THE CHURCH AS A REFORM ASSOCIATION

A. Revivalism Geared to Disinterested Benevolence

1. A "Preference for Disinterested Benevolence"

What made Charles G. Finney an epochal figure was not his "new measures" and the straight-forward eloquence of his preaching (although these would be sufficient to warrant him a significant place in American church history), but the new doctrine he preached. When he began his "Lectures on Revivals" with the proposition--"Religion is the work of man. It is something for man to do."[1]--he was expressing a new spirit abroad in the churches. His view was radically anthropocentric and cut directly across the well-worn paths of Calvinist teachings about the mystery of God's providence and predestination. If religion is "something for man to do," then the preacher must assault the ramparts of the sinner's sensibilities until he is ready "to do something" about his condition. "A revival is not a miracle, nor dependent on a miracle, in any sense," said Finney. "It is a purely philosophical result of the right use of the constituted means--as much so as any other effect produced by the application of means."[2] How different this view was from that of Jonathan Edwards, who marvelled at revivals as the "surprising work of God," was not overlooked by Finney's orthodox critics.

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[1] William G. McLoughlin (ed.), Lectures on Revivals of Religion (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1960), p. 9.

Since a revival is "as naturally a result of the use of the appropriate means as a crop is of the use of its appropriate means,"[3] there could be no alternative to a system of "new measures" to excite the sinner. Finney freely improvised upon this theme in his lectures and sermons. The place of this theme in his life and thought was the major concern of Part One of this treatise. Now, since it is the sinner himself who accomplishes his conversion, for he must make himself a new heart, the accent changes to the meaning of regeneration; and here the second great theme of Finney's life and thought comes into focus. It is the theme of disinterested benevolence, which informs his understanding of the church and ministry. Regeneration "must consist in a change in the attitude of the will, or a change in its ultimate choice, intention, or preference; a change from selfishness to benevolence . . ."[4] It was this "preference for disinterested benevolence" that energized revival converts and sent them forth in the interests of God's Kingdom, with a determination "to aim _at being useful in the highest degree possible_." It was this theme that inspired them to make the Church a universal reform association, which in its perfection would hasten the millennial day.

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[2] Ibid., p. 13.

[3] In the revised edition of 1868, cf. f.n. 8, Ibid., p. 14.

[4] Charles G. Finney, Lectures on Systematic Theology, Embracing Lectures on Moral Government . . . (Oberlin: James M. Fitch, 1846), p. 496.

The chief problem of Finney's doctrine of the church and ministry was the bifurcation of his doctrine by those who only partially comprehended it. Especially was this true of many zealous practitioners of the "new measures" who had neither the wit, nor the opportunity, to hear rightly their master. These are the ones who took hold of the "new measures" only and inflicted themselves upon the churches to their great hurt. However, it must be said that Finney was not always perfectly clear on the relationship of these two accents until his "Letters on Revivals" in 1845, and his _Lectures on Systematic Theology_ in 1846. During that first decade at Oberlin he achieved greater clarity and balance in his view. For instance, in the fifth of the series, "Letters on Revivals," published in the _Oberlin Evangelist_, he wrote about the misunderstanding of the true idea of religion which results in serious errors in the promotion of revivals. "Great multitudes," he exclaimed, "suppose it to consist merely in certain feelings and emotions and mere passive states of mind." The "true idea of the christian religion," he went on to say, "consisted alone in love, or in disinterested, perfect and universal benevolence."[5]

It was the tremendous scope of this theory which took hold of Finney. It could be stated simply: "A man is responsible for all the good he can do";[6] or, defined in abstract theological terms, as above. It was applied to all manner of issues. For instance, in discussing the question of slaveholding, he said: "There may often be the appearance of virtue in a slaveholder and in slaveholding; but it can absolutely be only an appearance. If it be properly slaveholding it is and must be oppression; it is and must be selfishness. Can it be that slaveholding is designed to promote the good of the slave for its own sake?"[7] As the argument continues, note its scope and direction:

> Should an individual be held to service for his own benefit; should the law of benevolence really demand it; this could no more be the crime of slaveholding and oppression than it is murder or any other crime. It would not be selfishness, but benevolence, and therefore no crime at all, but virtue. But selfishness embodies and includes every element of oppression. Its end, the means, and its every breath is but an incessant denial of all rights but those of self. All _sinners_ are _oppressors_ and slaveholders in heart and in fact. They practice continual oppression and

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5. Finney, "Letters on Revivals, No. 5," _The Oberlin Evangelist_, VII, No. 7 (March 26, 1845), 51.

6. William G. McLoughlin (ed.), _op_. _cit_., p. 115.

7. Finney, _Lectures on Systematic Theology_ (1846), p. 320

> nothing else. They make God serve them without wages, and they, as he says, "make Him to serve with their sins." God, all men and all things and events are as far as possible made to serve them without the return of the least disinterested regard to their interests. Disinterested regard! Why the very term contradicts the supposition that he is a sinner. He has, he can have in no instance any other than selfish aims in appearing, to care for any one's interest for its own sake.[8]

Slaveholding is a sin because it is selfishness, it lacks the "preference for disinterested benevolence." Likewise, all sinners lack a disinterested regard for God.

In lecturing on "The Law of God," he argued that the transaction of business upon the principles of commercial justice only (i.e., according to mere human laws), was a violation of the law of God; and, as it consists of rebellion against God, a professor of religion so employed is in real apostacy. What was required was the law of benevolence with its principle of restitution.[9] In the next lecture of this series, "Glorifying God," he applied the law of benevolence to buying and selling.[10] This is to say, after 1835 Finney was constantly applying his favorite theological tool, universal, disinterested benevolence.[11] This doctrine became one of the main accents of the Oberlin Theology, and was heralded abroad in The Oberlin Evangelist with great frequency. For example, Henry Cowles, editor of the Evangelist, wrote:

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[8] Ibid., pp. 320-321.

[9] Finney, "The Law of God," Lecture VI, The Oberlin Evangelist, I, No. 7 (March 13, 1839), 50.

[10] Finney, "Glorifying God," Lecture VII, The Oberlin Evangelist, I, No. 8 (March 27, 1839), 59.

> Christian liberality, retrenchment, and self-denial, are a means of developing your benevolence. No means are so efficient as these. If you would cultivate, strengthen and confirm your spirit of real benevolence, then study and practice this divine art, deny yourself to please Christ and to bless your more needy fellow-men. If you would crucify selfishness, drive in the nails, spike it to the tree and give it no quarter. . . . Each case of real self-denial is a little victory over self, and helps to enthrone benevolence in the empire of your heart.[12]

If sin is understood as a selfish disregard for, or manipulation of, other beings and Being; and regeneration is understood as a preference for disinterested benevolence; it is possible to cut through to the center of Finney's theological system, and his moral philosophy, and see there, at the center, how revivalism became geared to disinterested benevolence. All the actions of the Will consist in choices. If the good is chosen upon the condition of its value to the self, then this is selfishness; it thus becomes an aspect of our sinning.[13] Here, in these connections, may be seen the fundamental relationship between Finney's theology and his moral philosophy. And now, with respect to disinterested benevolence: "Good may be chosen _disinterestedly_, that is, for its own intrinsic value to _being in general_, that is, the highest well being of being in general may be chosen for its own sake or on account of its intrinsic value. This is what is called disinterested benevolence."[14] Again, "Nothing is or can be right but benevolence. Nothing is or can be moral law but that which requires that course of willing and acting that tends to secure the highest well-being of God and the universe. Nay, nothing can be moral law but that which requires that the highest well-being of God and of the universe should be chosen as an ultimate end."[15] Against "Rightarianism" he argues that the proper question is not "What is right?"; but, "What will most promote the good of the universe?"[16]

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[11] It is not meant to imply that Finney did not utilize this concept before 1835. It was this doctrine, implicit as well as explicit, that enthused his converts to put their shoulders to the wheel of the massive enterprises of the "Benevolent Empire."

[12] Henry Cowles, "Christian Beneficence, Economy, and Self-Denial," The Oberlin Evangelist, XI, No. 15 (July 18, 1849), 114.

From this fundamental relationship between theology and moral philosophy upon the common ground of disinterested benevolence, Finney was able to argue from the law of God to holiness through the offices of "good-willing," or "good-intending." "The law of God requires supreme disinterested benevolence," wrote Finney, "and all holiness, in the last analysis, resolves itself into some modification of supreme disinterested benevolence, or good-willing. Benevolence, or good-willing, is synonymous with good-intending, or intending good."[17] Although "supreme disinterested benevolence" is a highly generalized criterion in this statement, Finney gave it specific application at every juncture. For instance, "As a regenerate state consists in benevolence or good-will to all beings, it implies as sacred a regard to the feelings and reputation of our neighbor as we have to our own. Therefore a regenerate soul can not be a slanderer, a tale-bearer or a busybody in other men's matters."[18]

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[13] Finney, _Lectures on Systematic Theology_ (1846), p. 43.

[14] _Ibid._, p. 44.

[15] _Ibid._, p. 140.

[16] _Ibid._, p. 150.

Disinterestedness is an attribute of love; which is not to say that the mind takes no interest in the object loved, for it takes "a supreme interest" in it. Disinterestedness, in this sense, "expresses the mind's choice of an end for its own sake, and not merely upon condition that the good belongs to self. This love is disinterested in the sense that the highest well-being of God and the universe is chosen, not upon condition of its relation to self, but for its own intrinsic and infinite value. It is this attribute particularly that distinguishes this love from selfish love."[19] Similarly, disinterestedness is the clue to holiness. "Holiness, then," Finney explains, "must always consist in singleness of eye or intention. It must consist in the supreme disinterested choice, willing, or intending the good of God and of the universe, for its own sake."[20] Indeed, holiness is right intention, and right intention is "supreme, disinterested benevolence."[21] The elements of right intention are simply the choice or willing of every interest according to its "perceived intrinsic value"; and the devotion of one's entire being to the end of that willing.[22]

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[17] Ibid., p. 157.

[18] Ibid., p. 581.

The precise point at which the doctrine of disinterested benevolence becomes the motivating force for converts is now reached. Since disinterested benevolence is an attribute of love, else love would be selfish, and since it is also the clue to holiness, then the volition informed by love and holiness is precisely the willing informed by disinterested benevolence. And efficiency is a chief characteristic of benevolence. Finney argues that when benevolence is the supreme choice, or intention, of the soul, then it is impossible that it should not produce efforts to secure its end. As Finney puts it, "If the will has yielded to the intelligence in the choice of an end, it will certainly obey the intelligence in pursuit of that end."[23] Love, holiness, in a word, benevolence, are active; they are efficient. Therefore, it follows that all who are truly religious "will and must, from the very nature of true religion, be active in endeavoring to promote the good of being." "While effort is possible to a christian," Finney continues, "it is as natural to him as his breath. He has within him the very mainspring of activity, a heart set on the promotion of the highest good of universal being. This is the end for which he lives and moves and has his being."[24] This is what mid-nineteenth century Americans wanted in their religious experience, a "mainspring of activity"; and Finney's theology gave it to them. "An idle, an inactive, inefficient christian is a misnomer," said Finney. "Religion is an essentially active principle, and when and while it exists, it must exercise and manifest itself. It is not merely good desire, but it is good willing."[25]

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[19] Ibid., p. 215.

[20] Ibid., p. 159.

[21] Ibid., p. 166.

[22] Ibid.

According to Finney, then, conversion was only the beginning of the religious life. Believing that God is a God of benevolence, a truly regenerated convert must begin a new life with a supreme interest in God's kingdom. As they are no longer selfishly-minded sinners, they must engage in disinterested benevolence; they are responsible for "all the good they can do"; they must aim at "being useful in the highest degree possible." For Finney, and for his converts, the Church became a universal reform association to hasten the millennial day.[26] It is clear that Finney's theology and "new measures" had many critics, but for the Finneyites, the results justified the methods; as has been argued, the measure of success was the success of the measures. Under Finney's revivals conversion became a mighty impulse toward social reform, and the doctrine of disinterested benevolence was the "mainspring" that energized the Church as a reform association operating through the voluntary societies.[27] Like the Master, the Church must go about doing good. In a sermon, answering the rhetorical question, "What is implied in his going about doing good?"--Finney replied: "It is implied that Christ sought the happiness of mankind disinterestedly, in the sense that He valued their well-being, that He really loved it and enjoyed the efforts made to promote it. He was truly and honestly benevolent. It was because He loved the happiness of men that he labored to promote it."[28] A "preference for disinterested benevolence" must be the chief mark of the ministry of the Church.

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[23] *Ibid.*, p. 220.

[24] *Ibid.*, p. 221. The italics are mine.

[25] *Ibid.*

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[26] Cf. Arthur Cushman McGiffert, Jr., "Charles Grandison Finney; Frontier Preacher and Teacher, 1792-1875," Christendom, VII, No. 4 (Autumn, 1942), 501.

[27] It cannot be considered correct, as Perry Miller asserts, "The very success of his methods--which were those of the Revival carried to logical extremes--created the societies (Perry Miller, The Life of the Mind in America /New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1965/, p. 84.). The voluntary society movement antedates Finney's revivals; but it cannot be doubted that he provided the primary stimulus for its tremendous growth as the "Benevolent Empire."

2. The Sources of Finney's Thought

Finney was not a highly original thinker, but he boldly appropriated the theological ideas which came to him and made them his own. When one ponders his general lack of formal education, and remembers that the first Bible he owned was the one he purchased in connection with his law studies, when he was almost thirty years of age, and that his ministry from 1821 to 1832 was that of an itinerant evangelist, one cannot help but wonder about the sources of his thought. To put it a slightly different way: because Finney's thought does not show originality so much as strength and independence of expression, it may be argued that he was particularly susceptible to those theological ideas that were congenial to him with respect to the spirit of the times, the practical theological needs of his revival ministry, and his own religious experience. It is believed that this, indeed, was the case.

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[28] Finney, "Jesus Christ Doing Good," The Oberlin Evangelist, XIII, No. 21 (October 8, 1851), 161.

The significance of the Bible and his conversion have already been discussed. The influence of George W. Gale, his first theological teacher, must be considered to have been considerable, though the independent-thinking Finney found his dependence upon the Westminster Confession deplorable and contrary to his own understanding of the Bible, and to his own religious experience. During the second year of his ministry, Finney labored in the vicinity of Rome and Utica, and there in the Western Reserve he came into contact with ministers trained in the New England tradition. For them, the theology of Jonathan Edwards and his successors was the prevailing influence. It is probably in the home of Samuel C. Aikin, Presbyterian pastor in Utica, that Finney first read Edwards, and traces of Edwards' influence may be found in his celebrated sermon preached in Utica, "Christian Affinity," from the text, "Can two walk together except they be agreed?"[29] During his labors at Troy, in 1827, Finney became acquainted with N.S.S. Beman, a New School leader who played an important role in the movement to liberalize the Presbyterian Church which resulted in the schism of 1837.

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[29] Cf. a letter of Rev. S. C. Aiken in Autobiography of Lyman Beecher, Volume II, p. 67. Also, cf. G. Frederick Wright, Charles Grandison Finney (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1891), p. 178.

Prior to his New York ministry, preceding his removal to Oberlin, Finney came into intimate contact with the Tappans, and was brought into a circle of ministers under the influence of Nathaniel W. Taylor, the architect of the New Haven Theology. It is not known how often Finney may have had conversation with Taylor, but it is established that prior to 1833 there was at least one lengthy meeting in which theological matters were discussed.[30] Especially notable was their very similar understanding of the self-determining power of the human will. During 1831 and 1832 he conducted revivals in Providence and Boston and was brought into direct contact with the theological speculations of the New England divines. In October of 1831 he preached his "New Heart" sermon, in which the emphasis was upon the duty of sinners to change their own hearts, and was attacked for heresy by Asa G. Rand. The debate which followed was another contribution to the conflict between the two theological parties which then divided New England.

These two theological parties were known as the "Tasters" and the "Exercise Men"; both of them were developments out of the Edwardean rethinking of the Calvinism received from the Puritan fathers. They were attempting to restate the doctrine of regeneration and conversion in the light of God's sovereignty, on the one hand, and man's freedom, on the other. The "Tasters" held views that were essentially those of the Old School Calvinists; they maintained that regeneration by God preceded conversion, because there must be a radical change in the tastes of the soul before the sinner could choose holiness. The implication of this view was that sinners should not be exhorted to repent immediately, but that they should resort to the "means of grace"--Bible reading, attendance upon services of worship and preaching, etc.--and wait upon God to change their affections and give them a taste, or a relish, for holiness. The "Tasters" followed closely after Edwards' view of the "religious affections."

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[30] Cf. Nathaniel W. Taylor to Finney, November 3, 1833, Finney Papers, OCL.

The other theological stream, that of the "Exercise Men," flowed upon the other side of the question of "natural ability." This school maintained that regeneration and conversion were concurrent; therefore, sinners should be exhorted to "exercise" their natural ability and turn to God in repentance and faith. The Exercise scheme followed the modifications of the Edwardean theology accomplished by Samuel Hopkins. The New Haven Theology of Nathaniel W. Taylor introduced a radical explication of the self-determining power of the human will and marked a new phase in the attenuation of orthodox Calvinism.[31]

It should be clear that Finney, before coming to Oberlin, was thoroughly identified with the New School Calvinism of his period. The men with whom he was associated at Oberlin were of the same stamp. Professors John and Henry Cowles were recent graduates of Yale, and had studied with Nathaniel Taylor. Professor John Morgan had taken courses with Mark Hopkins and with President Griffin of Williams College; and later had the private instruction of pastors in New York City, and of Beecher in Lane Seminary. Each of these men was thoroughly acquainted with the New School position, as was President Asa Mahan, who was an Andover graduate and well acquainted with the Hopkinsian views. The early students at Oberlin were mostly of the Oneida and Lane Rebel type, thoroughly imbued with zeal for the voluntary societies and the Finneyite revivals that sustained them.[32]

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[31] The New England Theology has been traced from Jonathan Edwards through Joseph Bellamy (1719-90); Samuel Hopkins (1721-1803); Jonathan Edwards, Jr. (1745-1801), a proponent of the taste scheme; Nathaniel Emmons (1745-1801), a Hopkinsian; President Dwight (1752-1817), who rejected imputation and held that regeneration consisted of a new disposition, not holy exercises, yet was an advocate of the "use of means"; and Nathaniel Taylor (1786-1858), a pupil of Dwight who wished to complete the Edwardean scheme of reconciling human dependence and personal responsibility. Taylorism tended to surrender rather than vindicate Calvinism. Cf. Frank H. Foster, A Genetic History of New England Theology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1907); Joseph Haroutunian, Piety versus Moralism; The Passing of the New England Theology (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1932); and Sidney Earl Mead, Nathaniel William Taylor, 1786-1858, A Connecticut Liberal (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942).

Concurrent with the influences mentioned above were certain philosophical ideas widely dispersed in the American culture. The Natural Rights philosophy, brought to America chiefly in the writings of "the great Mr. Locke," emphasized the inalienable rights of all men from their common nature. This philosophy had played an important role in the Revolutionary generation, and had prepared the way for the Era of the Common Man. Jeffersonian individualism was a development of this same context, and Jefferson's presidential victory in 1800 marked a crucial decline in the role of the more aristocratically minded Federalists. Also to be noted was the stress on human worth found in Universalism and Unitarianism, the movements in sharpest revolt against the Calvinistic insistence upon man's depravity and inability, which was likewise a part of this cultural milieux. The tremendous growth of Methodism, with its stress upon the infinite love and pity of God for all sinful men, and its preaching of a plan of salvation offered to all men, distinctly influenced popular religion in this age of revivals. However, it was the concept of disinterested benevolence, elaborated by Samuel Hopkins, and the New Haven Theology of Taylor that most nearly embodied the theological formulation developed by Finney. A brief summary of these views will show a genetic relationship with the thought of Finney.

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[32] Cf. Wright, op. cit., p. 181.

After graduation from Yale, Samuel Hopkins became associated with Jonathan Edwards at Northampton. There he experienced a close bond of affectionate friendship which sealed his discipleship to that most noted of American eighteenth century theologians. Edwards' untimely death at Princeton became the occasion for Hopkins' systematic review of the papers of his teacher and friend. He was particularly struck by the treatise on "The Nature of True Virtue"(1765), which became the chief source for his development of a distinctive doctrine of disinterested benevolence. This doctrine became the guiding principle of *The System of Doctrines*, first published in 1792.[33]

For Hopkins, following Edwards, virtue was essentially benevolence. Sin was defined as self-love, and the inconsistency of all forms of selfishness with religion was set forth. Holiness was, precisely, disinterested benevolence. As an attribute of God, Hopkins described holiness as inclusive of all his attributes. When the creature conforms his life to disinterested benevolence, holiness becomes his moral excellence. The law of God is love, and he who fulfills the law of love is holy. Therefore, disinterested benevolence became a "test"of conversion. A truly disinterested benevolence would have no sympathy for rewards in conversion; there would be only a "willingness to be damned for the glory of God." His millennial view was an optimistic one concerned with the present age (not eschatological) in which the Kingdom of God was promoted by, and will consist of, disinterested benevolence.

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[33] Samuel Hopkins, *The System of Doctrines contained in Divine Revelation, explained and defended. Shewing their consistence and connexion with each other. To which is added, A Treatise on the Millennium*, 2 volumes, second edition (Boston: Lincoln and Edmands, 1811).

It is important to note that Hopkins did differ from Edwards in a significant way; and it is this difference which identifies Finney with Hopkins, more so than with Edwards. The emphasis on disinterested benevolence without a doubt came from Jonathan Edwards; however, the phrase "being in general," to which disinterested benevolence was directed, was differently interpreted by these men. For Edwards, "being in general" meant a certain quality, or essence, common to all being, but understood only by the regenerate; Hopkins used the term as comprehending all being, or the summation of all individual beings. Edwards' view was platonic and saw "being" as emanating from God; therefore he could adapt his view to a limited atonement. Hopkins differed in that he held a view that implied the greatest good for the greatest number, a view quite inconsistent with a doctrine of limited atonement.[34]

Nathaniel W. Taylor was the first professor of theology in the Yale Divinity School. In his teaching he was principally concerned with developing a theology that could be preached and win men to an immediate acceptance of Christ as Savior. Hence, he placed a fundamental stress upon man's free agency and his real ability to play a part in his own salvation. In order to formulate such a theology he had to reconcile human dependence and personal responsibility in a way heretofor not achieved in the Edwardean tradition. The "natural ability" of man to turn to Christ was emphasized, in that the soul was not corrupt prior to the exertion of moral agency. In this scheme all sin was considered to be voluntary, hence the doctrines of imputation and "natural inability" held by the hyper-Calvinists were set aside. He believed that the Hopkinsians were right in denying hereditary sin; but wrong in resolving sin into particular acts of the will. For Taylor sin was a permanent principle, a state of the will, an abiding choice, the motive of subordinate choices. Nevertheless, accountable agency requires the possibility of a "contrary choice"; therefore he believed that the sinner would sin, but it was "certainty with power to the contrary." Conversion was the superseding of a wrong principle, namely love of the world, by the right principle, love of God. Taylorism, as has been pointed out, tended to surrender rather than vindicate Calvinism; and his antagonists continued to hold to an inherited tendency to sin prior to any personal choice. Bennet Tyler and Leonard Woods of Andover were opposed to Taylor, as were Nathaniel Emmons and other Hopkinsians; but the New Haven Theology became the theology of Lyman Beecher and the Lane Theological Seminary, and was almost completely adopted by Charles G. Finney and Oberlin. It is granted that Finney was a forceful and independent thinker, and it is difficult, indeed, to ascribe with certainty originality in his thought here, and dependence there, but it may be argued that he was "Taylor's true successor."[35]

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[34] Cf. Sidney E. Mead, op. cit., p. 104.

Finney set out, during the Oberlin years, systematically to attack the Calvinistic _status quo_. His independent spirit is reflected in the preface to his _Lectures on Systematic Theology_ (1847) where he writes:

> True christian consistency consists, not in stereotyping our opinions and views and in refusing to make any improvement in knowledge lest we should be guilty of change, but it consists in holding our minds open

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[35] Frank H. Foster, _op. cit._, p. 453. Sidney E. Mead has argued that Taylor was not the culmination of the process which is the general thesis of Joseph Haroutunian's study, _Piety versus Moralism: The Passing of the New England Theology_. Mead believes that Taylor did not stand in the Edwardean line, and suggests that Edwardeanism was never _the_ New England Theology. Cf. Mead, _op. cit._, pp. viii-ix.

> to receive the rays of truth from every quarter, and in changing our views and language and practice as often and as fast as we can obtain further information. . . .
>
> Hundreds of years since, when intellectual and moral science was a wilderness, an assembly of divines, as they are called, affecting to cast off popery, undertook to stereotype the theology of the church and to think for all future generations, thus making themselves popes *in perpetuum*. Every uninspired attempt to frame for the church an authoritative standard of opinion which shall be regarded as an unquestionable exposition of the word of God, is not only impious in itself, but it is also a tacit assumption of the fundamental of Papacy.[36]

This is quite a different spirit from that of Charles Hodge, who liked to remark with pride that no new ideas in theology had been taught at Princeton for fifty years.

It is no wonder that Finney was considered by many to be the heresiarch of Calvinism. If we accept Hodge's judgment, published in the *Biblical Repertory* of June, 1847, in a review article of Finney's *Lectures on Systematic Theology*, we shall have a conviction that his theology was a complete *reductio ad absurdum* of the whole New School system. Without debating Hodge's judgment, it is interesting to note that Finney responded in the *Oberlin Quarterly Review* with a withering attack on Hodge's piece of criticism. Published under the title of "Finney's Theology, and the Princeton Review: or An Examination of the Review of Finney's Systematic Theology, Published in the Princeton Review, April, 1847," it manifests Finney's skill in defending the two principal premises of his theology; namely, that moral obligation is limited by ability, and that the highest form of virtue is benevolence.[37] It also displays his concurrence with the New School theology with its prevailing Taylorism. His cavalier attitude, expressed at the end of the "Examination" showed little concern for Hodge's criticism, for Finney was in the prevailing stream of the New School theology. He closed with these remarks:

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[36] Charles G. Finney, *Lectures on Systematic Theology, Embracing Ability (natural, moral and gracious,) Repentance, Impenitence, Faith and Unbelief, Justification, Sanctification, Election, Reprobation, Divine Purposes, Divine Sovereignty, and Perseverance* (Oberlin: James M. Fitch, 1847), p. iii.

> There are a number of other things contained in the review before us that I should like to examine, and may do so, the Lord willing, at another time. . . . It might be amusing enough to turn the reductio ad absurdum upon this writer himself. He has asserted many strange and absurd things included in this review. But for the present at least I must close.[38]

Born in the eighteenth century, Finney became acculturated in the new movements of the nineteenth century. These movements are elaborated in the Appendix of this treatise, where the "Awakened Church" is set within the matrix of the social, political, intellectual, and religious patterns of the time. At this juncture it is sufficient to point out that the style of his logical analysis, and his Cartesian arguments for the existence of God, are related to the Age of Reason. But, when Finney turns to the practical matter of "measures" to produce revivals,--"I said that a revival is the result of the right use of the appropriate means"[39]--there is a shift to an emphasis upon experience and practical results. He said:

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[37] Cf. reprint of this article in pamphlet form, under the same title, OCL, pp. 15, 58.

[38] Finney, The Reviewer Reviewed, p. 59.

> I wish this idea to be impressed on all your minds, for there has long been an idea prevalent that promoting religion has something very peculiar in it, not to be judged of by the ordinary rules of cause and effect; in short, that there is no connection of the means with the result, and no tendency in the means to produce the effect. No doctrine is more dangerous than this to the prosperity of the church, and nothing more absurd.[40]

There was an essential development in the Era of the Common Man of empiricism, especially of the frontier pragmatic type, of which Finney's thought was a particular instance.

It is very difficult to place Finney at a particular point in the intellectual matrix of his time, but an attempt to do so must be made. On the one hand, Finney was not associated with the intellectual elite, for his revival and teaching labors were largely among citizens of the rural and lower classes and the newer lower middle class of the growing cities. Finney, himself, participated in the upward rise of social mobility. Yet, the intellectual climate must be characterized as anti-intellectual. As Richard Hofstadter has remarked, "It seemed to be the goal of the common man in America to build a society that would show how much could be done without literature and learning--or rather, a society whose literature and learning would be largely limited to such elementary things as the common man could grasp and use."[41] Hofstadter considered Finneyite revivalism as a case in point. On the other hand, Finney's brash opposition to the Old Schoolism of Princeton Seminary, and the Westminster Confession, may be seen as a revolt against the tyranny of the intellect, rather than anti-intellectualism.[42]

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[39] Finney, Lectures on Revivals (edition cited), p. 13.

[40] Ibid., p. 14.

Indeed, Finney's revolt against the tyranny of the intellect bore traces of romanticism. His tendency was to cast out "metaphysics," and identify religious expression with the heart.[43] The same tendency is noted in the moral philosophy of America throughout the 1830's. Wilson Smith, in his excellent study on Professors and Public Ethics, has indicated that academic moral philosophy in America was being transformed into moral theology. The ethical premises of the American Enlightenment, sympathetic to moral pluralism, were being changed to those congenial to the theological monism of the "Protestant Counter Reformation." Revelation, or intuition, gradually superseded prudence as the chief criterion of moral judgments and action.[44] Both Asa Mahan and Charles Finney demonstrated this shift to moral theology, and both grounded it in disinterested benevolence.

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[41] Richard Hofstadter, Anti-Intellectualism in America (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963), p. 51.

[42] Cf. Perry Miller, op. cit., p. 30.

[43] Cf. Ibid., p. 76.

Again, the revolt against the tyranny of the intellect exhibited itself in the rhetoric of the revivalists. The academic disciplines of rhetoric and logic meant little to Finney, as such, for the technique of Finney was designed to persuade and convince the common man of his desperate need for salvation, and no colorful image, or frightful description, or compelling plea, was overlooked in his preaching. Dramatic gestures, a free use of the full range of the voice, the piercing eyes boring into the consciousness of the anxious sinner, along with apt and homely illustrations, were used to fill the mind with compelling images. His preaching was quite unlike the formal preaching of the day, it was more like a lawyer arguing before a jury; there was feeling and imagination, and there was reasoning and demonstration. But, in the final analysis, the crucial battlefield was in the feelings, the affections, the heart, and not in the mind--it was the rhetoric of romantic communication.[45] It was a rhetoric designed to gear revivalism to disinterested benevolence in an age in which the benevolent man, "the man of feeling," was raised to the status of a cult by a class of literature which historians call "Sentimentalism," a literature written in late eighteenth century Britain, and reverently read in America.[46] Thus we may come to see that the rise of a benevolent spirit was a mark of Finney's age, and his participation in its development was of the greatest significance.

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[44] Wilson Smith, Professors and Public Ethics; Studies of Northern Moral Philosophers before the Civil War (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1956), p. 186.

B. The Rise and Fall of the Benevolent Empire

1. The Rise of the Benevolent System

When Horace Bushnell gave his famous discourse for home missions entitled, "Barbarism the First Danger," he was giving a forceful declaration to a well-established and favorite theme.[47] His thesis was fully justified by observations of the frontier experience; namely, "*emigration, or a new settlement of the social state, involves a tendency to social decline*." "There must, in every such case," he said, "be a relapse towards barbarism, more or less protracted, more or less complete."[48] With keen insight he discussed a few of the reasons why such a decline should occur. First, he noted, "the society transplanted, in a case of emigration, cannot carry its roots with it; for society is a vital creature, having roots of antiquity, which inhere in the very soil--in the spots consecrated by valor, by genius and by religion."[49] Education must be "imperfect in degree and partial in extent": "There is no literary atmosphere breathing through the forests or across the prairies."[50] Religion tends to be "narrow and crude," because "the decline of manners and mental cultivation, consequent on a life in the woods, carried with it a correspondent decline of morals and religion."[51] "Western character has many powerful and promising qualities," he said, "but it wants the salt of religious virtue, the sobriety of discipline, and the modesty of true intelligence."[52] The answer to this threat of barbarism was clear: "Religion is the only prop on which we can lean with any confidence; and Home

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[45] Cf. Perry Miller, *op. cit.*, pp. 26, 23, 61, 32.

[46] *Ibid.*, p. 78.

[47] Horace Bushnell, *Barbarism the First Danger, A Discourse for Home Missions* (New York: Printed for the American Home Missionary Society by William Osborn, 1847).

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[48] Ibid., pp. 4-5. It is interesting to note that in this discourse he treated "barbarism" as the first danger, and "Romanism" as the second great concern.

[49] Ibid., p. 6.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Ibid., pp. 7, 14.

[52] Ibid., pp. 21-22.

Missions are the vehicle of religion. . . . There is no shape of society, least of all any shape of new society, that will not rot itself down and dissolve, unless there descend upon it from above, a conservating power which it has not in itself. Nothing but religion, a ligature binding society to God, can save it."[53]

Bushnell, in 1847, was speaking about the further reaches of the western frontier, beyond Western New York, and Ohio. But the same threat of barbarism had existed along the nearer frontier at the turn of the century. It was then that the tradition of the British Societies for moral reform made their impact upon American society. The beginning of the national societies dates from the founding of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions in 1810; other societies for moral reform soon followed. As this system of benevolent enterprises unfolded, two differing approaches to moral reform were manifest. John Bodo has identified these, and the strange paradox that they entailed. The theocrats, heirs of the Federalist cultural and political tradition, sought to achieve the moral reformation of individuals in their approach to the reform of barbarism; on the other hand, the anti-theocrats, acculturated in the Jeffersonian and Jacksonian traditions, set about to reform the institutions of society in order that the individual might have a better life. The paradox that inheres in these two approaches to reform is that the theocrats customarily thought in terms of society as a whole and regarded American society from a patriotic standpoint; yet, they rejected every attempt to reform society apart from the means of regenerating individuals. Similarly, the anti-theocrats, who generally gave little thought to society or the nation, except in terms of the individual, reversed their role and became the reformers of the institutions of society.[54]

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[53] Ibid., p. 28.

Charles Finney was an heir of this anti-theocratic tradition, and his whole-hearted support of the benevolent system through his revivals and theology of disinterested benevolence was the source of a tremendous impulse to the national societies. Another source of power for the benevolent system was the optimistic assurance of progress attached to "simple contractual relationships" which prevailed in the American culture of the first half of the nineteenth century. J. L. Talmon's analysis illumines this point:

> The age of reason failed to grasp the organic character of a society and an age, with the various aspects intertwined and merging into each other. Sharply defined individuals; fundamentally equal,

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[54] John R. Bodo, The Protestant Clergy and Public Issues, 1812-1848 (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1954), p. 176.

> of their own free will and in full awareness of what they are doing, enter into contractual arrangements. This type of individualism was natural to a pre-industrial society, and to an age that was so thrilled with the discovery of Reason that it became totally oblivious of history. Remove the obstacles, landlord and priest, abolish the evil laws; and the social harmony of the natural order would follow at once in a society of simple contractual relationships.[55]

The early success of the national societies enlarged rather than restrained the optimistic confidence placed in these contractual relationships, and the benevolent system had unbounded growth.

In the 1850's, when the benevolent system had lost much of its earlier momentum, the Oberlin Evangelist continued to thrust upon its readers a sense of moral responsibility for the religious and cultural development of the west. "The evangelization of the west," wrote Thome, "has been a leading object of attention at the east." He continued:

> The great valley has been for years the field of home missions, projected and sustained by the churches of New England. Thousands and millions have contributed by eastern Christians to train ministers and missionaries for the west, to build churches, to endow colleges and theological seminaries, and to scatter religious books, tracts and periodicals, among the sparse population of the new States and territories. And never perhaps was money more wisely expended.[56]

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[55] J. L. Talmon, Political Messianism; The Romantic Phase (London: Secker and Warburg, 1960), p. 22.

[56] J. A. Thome, "Moral Relations of the East and West," The Oberlin Evangelist, XIV, No. 7 (March 31, 1852), 52.

But the work was not completed, and the threat of barbarism remained. Thome asserted that the "energies of western mind have not been turned to moral ends--not even of converted mind generally." "The west then is not prepared to be thrown morally upon its own resources"; he concluded, "the time for this has not yet come. There is therefore still an obligation resting upon the churches of New England--one indeed of vastly increased weight; and only beginning to be seriously imperative."[57] Also, Thome pointed to another problem, which was becoming apparent in the work of the benevolent societies. "Eastern clergymen," he wrote, "laboring as missionaries, or as pastors, at the west, have aimed not only to Evangelize it, but to New Englandize it."[58] It was this fact of socialization that betrayed the forces of secularization which were lurking in the benevolent system with respect to the church and ministry.

This benevolent system, with its network of societies for moral reform, has been named appropriately, "The Benevolent Empire."[59] Like the British benevolent societies, this

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[57] *Ibid.*

[58] *Ibid.*, p. 59.

[59] This is the label given by Gilbert H. Barnes, *The Antislavery Impulse, 1830-1844* (New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1933), pp. 17-28. It is called "The Evangelical United Front" by Charles I. Foster, *An Errand of Mercy; The Evangel-*
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American network of societies had no formal relationship with the churches, and was therefore free of any direct ecclesiastical control. The leadership of this benevolent empire was exercised through a series of interlocking directorates composed of a rather small number of philanthropists and prominent clergymen. Such names as Thomas Smith Grimke, Gerrit Smith, Anson Phelps Stokes, and William Jay were frequently seen on the lists of presidents, vice-presidents, auditors, and life-members; but none appeared more often than that of the Tappans.[60] These men were the "princes" of the benevolent empire.

It may be suggested that Finney was the "high priest" of the benevolent empire because of the theoretical and practical role he played in this realm. The New York philanthropists, who sat in high places, were also the supporters of his ministry. The converts of his revivals provided a stream of zealous reformers, who trooped under the banners of the various benevolent societies. His doctrine of disinterested benevolence, widely employed, was the theoretical, hence the apolo-

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(Cont.) ical United Front, 1790-1837 (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1960), passim. Foster's treatment of the benevolent system as "American Victorianism" is parallel to the analysis of "moral trusteeship" in Clifford S. Griffin, Their Brothers' Keepers; Moral Stewardship in the United States, 1800-1865 (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1960).

[60] Gilbert H. Barnes, op. cit., p. 19.

getical, ground upon which the practical structures were raised. Yet, it must be emphasized, Finney never favored the separation of reform from the church. He held that "the great business of the church is to reform the world--to put away every kind of sin."[61] Consistent with his theological position, he argued:

> The church of Christ was originally organized to be a body of reformers. The very profession of christianity implies the profession and virtually an oath to do all that can be done for the universal reformation of the world. The Christian church was designed to make aggressive movements in every direction--to lift up her voice and put forth her energies against iniquity in high and low places--to reform individuals, communities, and governments, and never rest until the kingdom and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven shall be given to the saints of the most High God--until every form of iniquity shall be driven from the earth.[62]

He implied that the benevolent societies, as such, came into existence primarily because "scarcely a church can be found in the land which as a body will have any thing to do with reform." "Hence," he continued, "the only way in which Christians in the churches who would do anything towards reforming mankind can make their influence felt is by forming societies, composed often partly of Christians and partly of those who profess no religion. These unite together to consecrate their influence against some form of iniquity that is cursing mankind."[63] Finney's problem was, that in the midst of his revolt against "the pernicious attitude of the church on the reforms of the age," and against the "theological and ecclesiastical tyranny" of the Presbyterian Church, he had no adequate view of the institutional validity and viability of the church.

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[61] Finney, "The Pernicious Attitude of the Church on the Reforms of the Age," The Oberlin Evangelist, "Letters on Revivals, No. 23," VIII, No. 2 (January 21, 1846), 11.

[62] Ibid.

It has been indicated that the benevolent empire was free of any direct ecclesiastical control. But this is not to say that there were no relationships between the societies and the church. Indeed, the critical problem was rather along the other line; namely, that for many, distinctions between the benevolent empire and the church became blurred. The fact that many of the societies were so intimately related to revivalism, and that New School Presbyterians and Congregationalists were in the first rank of leadership in the societies, led many liberals among the Unitarians and Universalists to complain that the benevolent empire was a thinly veiled scheme to set up a Calvinistic establishment. It was further asserted that the revivals, so zealously promoted, were primarily the means by which these schemers were deluding the public and marshalling them to support the benevolent societies.[64]

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[63] Ibid.

[64] Cf. William C. Walzer, "Charles Grandison Finney and the Presbyterian Revival of Central and Western New York" (typed Ph.D. thesis, University of Chicago, 1944), p. 137.

In a quaint pamphlet with an amazing title--*A "Bunker Hill" Contest, A.D. 1826. Between the "Holy Alliance" for the Establishment of Hierarchy, and Ecclesiastical Domination over the Human Mind, on the one side; And the Asserters of Free Inquiry, Bible Religion, Christian Freedom and Civil Liberty on the other. THE REV. CHARLES FINNEY. "Home Missionary," and High Priest of the Expeditions of the Alliance in the Interior of New-York; Head Quarters, County of Oneida*--Ephraim Perkins argued that through the "benevolent societies" and the "new measures" the Presbyterians were trying to take over.[65] Again, Alice Felt Tyler has shown, in *Freedom's Ferment*, how reform movements of every kind and description began to flourish during this period; and almost all of them were "the product of evangelical religion."[66] What is emphasized here is the relationship between the reform movements and "evangelical religion," the priority of the Presbyterian and Congregational Churches in the benevolent kingdom, and the key role of Finney.[67]

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[65] Ephraim Perkins, *A "Bunker Hill" Contest, A.D. 1826* . . . . (Utica: Printed for the author, 1826).

[66] Cf. Alice Felt Tyler, *Freedom's Ferment, Phases of American Social History to 1860* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1944), passim; especially, "Evangelical Religion," pp. 23-45.

[67] "Perhaps the chief significance of Charles G. Finney lies not so much in the fact that he was the instrument in /adding

A listing of "the great eight" societies, which formed the major part of the benevolent empire, will show that three of the eight were established well before Finney's New York state revivals, but five of them cluster about the surge of revivalism in which Finney played the leading role. Scores of his converts entered the ministry, many others became home or foreign missionaries, still others became lecturers on behalf of benevolent societies, especially those connected with the temperance and antislavery crusades. The establishment of the benevolent empire centered in the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (1810), the American Education Society (1815), the American Bible Society (1816), the American Sunday School Union (1824), the American Tract Society (1825), the American Home Missionary Society (1826), the Seaman's Friend Society (1826), and the American Temperance Society (1826). To these must be added the American Colonization Society (1816) and the host of antislavery societies that followed in its train. Countless other societies, for peace, for the maintenance of the Sabbath, etc., had their zealous participants.

(Cont.) adding tens of thousands to the active ranks of the American churches, as in the circumstance that these new converts became active participants in every forward movement of their time." William Warren Sweet, Revivalism in America. Its Origin, Growth and Decline (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1944), p. 160.

It must be clear that the rise of the benevolent empire had basic relationships with the church. The leadership was composed of churchmen, and the larger part of the participants in the societies were imbued with zeal carried over from the revivals. The theological ground of the benevolent system was the doctrine of disinterested benevolence, accompanied by an optimism which reflected itself in a view of the reform movements as a pre-millenial campaign.[68] However, it must be observed that the benevolent empire quickly became an institution in its own right, with its own momentum; and, as it had no organic relationship with the church, its dynamism tended to set up a conflict situation which resulted in the opposition of ecclesiastical bodies to the benevolent system.

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[68] The style and content of this view may be illustrated in the following quotation. Attention is called to the themes of "progress," "Social and moral reforms," "association," and the religious reforms. After mentioning the progress in expansion, the science of agriculture, manufacturing, the use of steam power; and the progress in "mind no less than matter," in such fields as telegraphy, the free school system, etc.; the preacher turns to "the social and moral reforms of the age."

"Some of us can remember when the Temperance Reformation first crept slowly and cautiously forward upon the battleground against whatever would intoxicate. It was a new and seemed a strange experiment--yet onward it moved until it had developed the grand idea--association, creating power against vice and wrong. The very idea was worth to mankind the toil of a century. Yet it did not take more than ten years to develop it in its full form and brightest aspect.

The principle once seized upon, we have seen it employed in the moral conflict against gambling, against licentiousness, /against

Concurrent with the conflict situation, and the drawing apart of the benevolent and ecclesiastical systems, was a shift toward moralism and secularism in the benevolent empire. This shift was also reflected in the interaction of the two systems, in the church. The observed result of these factors, and others to be discussed, was the decline of the benevolent empire and the restructuring of the church in the pattern of denominationalism.

2. The Decline and Fall of the Benevolent Empire

The rise of the benevolent empire, out of the fervor for reform and the new sense of unity experienced among christians as a result of the revivals of the Second Great Awakening,

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(Cont.) against Sabbath-desecration, against Slavery, and against war. As a result, we have seen masses of mind compacted, disciplined, bearing down in solid phalanx upon most of the giant sins and wrongs of our times, until these moral and social conflicts have become _the_ wars and battles of the age. . . .

It deserves more than a passing remark that these conflicts of the nineteenth century have only just begun. . . .

But it is something to have caught the glorious idea of _association for moral conflicts_. It is something to have taken even a few lessons in the tactics of these pre-millennial campaigns.

. . . .

From movements of reform which are distinctively social and moral, we may turn next to those which are appropriately religious, and often termed, though not distinctively so, benevolent." /There follows a discussion of missions, Bible distribution, Sunday Schools, etc./ Henry Cowles, "God's Work in the Past Half-Century," Sermon by the editor, _The Oberlin Evangelist_, XIII, No. 2 (January 14, 1851), 9-10.

presents an anomalous situation. On the one hand, the sectarian divisions of christians were represented in the churches; and on the other, their catholic unity was expressed in the benevolent societies. This situation was not, at first, uncongenial to the Congregationalists of New England who played the primary role in originating the earliest societies. Their theory of the Church, as has been pointed out, was essentially concerned with the voluntary association of regenerated christians maintained to observe the ordinances of public worship, and the discipline of its members. In this scheme, the societies were organized on broad catholic principles and open to the participation of all christians who shared the spirit of reform. It was altogether natural that Presbyterian clergy and laity should be drawn into these societies through the centripetal force of enthusiasm for reform engendered by the revivals.

The Plan of Union of 1801 had given expression to the desire for unity in a practical way, and the General Assembly of 1816 passed a resolution favoring cooperation with the voluntary societies.[69] However, the high-church theory implicit in Presbyterianism soon found its champions, and something like the ancient cry, "To your tents, O Israel!," was heard in the land. These champions, with Charles Hodge in the lead, fervently upheld the view that the ministry of the church, in all of its conceivable parts, was the proper function of "the church as such" and could not be delegated to extraneous voluntary societies. This high-church opposition to the benevolent empire, and the later call to sunder those bonds of fellowship which had been so effective in the work of the societies, was an important part of the conflict which led to the schism of 1837. It was one of the main causes of the decline of the benevolent empire.

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[69] E. H. Gillett, History of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Publication Committee, 1864), II, p. 217.

The question that exacerbated the high-church party was not so much a theological one as it was a constitutional question; namely, shall the church rule in its own house? Only at particular moments was it recognized that this question and its context was opening the whole question of the nature of the church and ministry to review. As early as 1829, the pages of the Biblical Repertory carried a debate upon the role of the American Education Society (est. 1815). The direction of the argument is manifested in the following quotation from the "remarks of the editors":

> We are told, that in the management of every great concern there must be power, and that power may be abused. That the officers of our national government may abuse the confidence reposed in them. True, but in the two cases there is this remarkable difference: The officers of the government are responsible to the people; the members of this Society are not responsible to the great body of this church. . . . The American Education Society chooses its own

> co-members and successors, elects its Directors and officers, receives from the church its funds, and sends her such pastors as the Society and its Branches choose to educate. It may be said, the Presbyteries, Associations, and Councils, may refuse to ordain them. True; but where can they find means of educating any others, as the funds necessary for this purpose are all thrown in to one great channel?
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> . . . .
>
> This is no controversy between Congregationalists and Presbyterians. It is a question, whether the American Education Society shall have the power to govern the church? Whether we are willing to submit, without a murmer, to their direction; and resign ourselves with passive confidence into their hands, on their simple assurance that they never have, and never will abuse their power?[70]

In 1832 the debate was centered upon "domestic missions," and the American Home Missionary Society (est. 1826). The Biblical Repertory published the Fifteenth Report of the Board of Missions of the Presbyterian Church in which the board opted for a high-church view, but retained an irenic spirit toward the American Home Missionary Society. It is important to note that the concept of "the church a universal reform association," favored by the proponents of the benevolent empire, is here countered by the concept of "the Church a missionary society." A significant transition was taking place, namely, the transition from voluntary missionary societies to the Church as a missionary organization.

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[70] "Remarks of the Editors on the Foregoing Strictures," /i.e., "Prof. Stuart's Examination of the Review of the American Education Society"/, Biblical Repertory and Theological Review, I (1829), 633, 637.

> In fact, every Church, that would be faithful to the great object for which a Church was instituted, ought to consider herself as a MISSIONARY SOCIETY, bound to maintain in perfect purity, and to spread abroad to every creature all the doctrines and institutions of Christ. . . . But still she ought, undoubtedly, by all fair, honest, and honourable means, to endeavour to extend the reception of the influence of what she verily believes to be the truth as it is in Jesus. Those who call this *sectarianism* or *High Church*, plainly show that they understand neither the authorized meaning of terms, nor the nature of Christian duty.
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> . . . .
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> Important as is the Board of Missions of the General Assembly, and freely as we give it our *first* and our *peculiar* affection, as the organ for extending that Church which we decisively prefer to any other on earth:--it by no means, in our opinion, supersedes the necessity of the Home Missionary Society. There is ample room for both and more.[71]

In 1832 it was thought that there was "ample room for both and more," but open conflict for preferential standing on the mission fields of the west brought the matter to a breaking point, and in the General Assembly of 1837 a resolution was passed "affirming that the organization and operations of the so-called American Home Missionary Society and American Education Society, and its branches of whatever name, are exceedingly injurious to the peace and purity of the Presbyterian Church. We recommend, therefore, that they cease to operate within any of our churches."[72]

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[71] "Domestic Missions," *Biblical Repertory and Theological Review*, IV (1832), 73-74, 75.

[72] E. H. Gillett, *op. cit.*, p. 513. Baird writes:

/"The

Latent within the high-church theory of the Presbyterians, which opposed the benevolent empire and informed the movement toward proscription in 1837, was the concept of "the Church as a missionary organization." This latent concept became manifest in the decisive shift from voluntary missionary societies to a type of ecclesiastical mission in which the doctrine of the Church as a missionary organization was affirmed.[73] Low-church Presbyterians, which constituted a large

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(Cont.) "The question between the boards and institutions of our Church and those of voluntary origin and constitution, originated, and derived its whole significance, from the fact that the former were set for the promulgation and defence of the gospel as exhibited in our standards; whilst the latter were devoted to the propagation of the undefinable principles of 'liberal Presbyterianism.'" Samuel J. Baird, A History of the New School, and of the Questions Involved in the Disruption of the Presbyterian Church in 1838 (Philadelphia: Claxton, Remsen, & Haffelfinger, 1868), p. 1.

The distinction between "voluntary associations" and "ecclesiastical boards" continued a matter of discussion; but the distinction was clear. Chesebrough wrote: "The leading forms under which missionary and other charitable enterprises of Christianity have, in modern times, been prosecuted, have been those of Ecclesiastical Boards and Voluntary Associations. An Ecclesiastical Board, by whatever designation it may be known, is a body of directors, trustees, or commissioners, constituted by the authority of a church acting in its corporate capacity, and subjected to its jurisdiction. It is in fact a bureau or department of the control which that church exercises over the particular work committed to the charge of the Board, and it carries with it the authority of the church within the sphere of its operations. On the other hand, a Voluntary Association for Christian enterprises is, as its name imports, a voluntary union effected by the mutual consent of all the parties composing it." Amos S. Chesebrough, Voluntary Associations (Hartford: Case, Lockwood & Brainard Co., 1881), pp. 3-4.

[73] Earl R. MacCormac has demonstrated this shift in his /doctoral

number of the New School party, continued to be friendly towards the benevolent empire until a few years after the schism when the necessity of creating efficient structures in the New School Presbyterian Church led them to establish ecclesiastical boards reflecting this very same transition.

In addition to the high-church opposition to the voluntary societies and the transition to the Church as a missionary organization, two other factors entered into the decline of the benevolent empire. The combination of the loss of

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(Cont.) doctoral dissertation, "The Transition from Voluntary Missionary Society to the Church as a Missionary Organization Among the American Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and Methodists (typed Ph.D. thesis, Yale University, 1960), passim. In the Abstract of this dissertation, MacCormac writes:

"Contrary to the contemporary assertion that the difference between European and American missionary organizations stems chiefly from the existence of the frontier and the absence of national Churches, the ecclesiastical missions which developed in the United States, were due to a wider complex of reasons. While Old School Presbyterians made a transition amid rising denominationalism which was a return to traditional confessionalism, Congregationalists and Methodists came to an implicit affirmation that the Church was a missionary organization in their effort to bring efficiency and consolidation into the administration of missions. Each of the transitions occurred primarily because of administrative considerations. None was a direct result of a theology of missions or a doctrine of the Church, although a small group within the Old School did express their concern for missionary organization in theological terms. All three denominations had lost most of their corporate sense of the Church by the time of their respective transitions, and the theological emphasis of the nineteenth century upon man only helped the tendency of American Protestantism to adopt cultural practices. In a sense, the development of the missionary organizations of the Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and Methodists reflects the persistent pragmatic emphasis in American life.

financial support incurred by the General Assembly's action of 1837 and the financial panic of that same year was disastrous. The "princes" of the empire were forced to cut back on their benevolent giving and many projects lost their economic support. Another factor, more difficult to assess, was the collapse of the revival cycle. It was the surge of revivals which had provided a mighty impulse for benevolent reform, but by 1839 the "Second Great Awakening" had burned itself out.[74] With its spiritual, as well as financial and institutional, support gone, the benevolent empire moved inexorably from decline to fall. In fact, a centrifugal force began to operate within the rising denominations which threw off the benevolent societies until, in the twentieth century, the American Bible Society alone continues to play a dynamic role in American society.[75]

"Now the great business of the church is to reform the world," said Finney. It was widely agreed among evangelicals that if society is to be saved, it must be saved by religion. But, how shall this "great business of the church" be carried out? In so far as Finney stressed the conversion of individuals, the tendency was toward moralism. His "measures" prevailed upon the sinner to convert himself by an act of his will and dedicate himself to disinterested benevolence toward God and all being. The contrast between the regenerate and the unregenerate man was precisely that the regenerate man had submitted himself to the moral law of God and the control of reason, that is, to the law of disinterested and universal benevolence. "Indeed there can not possibly be any other rule of duty than the moral law," wrote Finney. "There can be no other standard with which to compare our actions, and in the light of which to decide their moral character."[76] Further, man's guilt before the moral law depended upon his knowledge; and since perfection was a matter of benevolent intention, it tended to become an issue of subjective attitude rather than objective achievement. The whole stress upon man's ability rather than God's sovereignty contributed to the prevalence of this subjective attitude.

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[74] Cf. Gilbert H. Barnes, op. cit., pp. 161-163.

[75] Cf. Leonard W. Bacon, A History of American Christianity (New York: The Christian Literature Co., 1897), p. 408.

Thus, it may be argued that Finney's theology tended toward moralism; certainly at the popular level it was effective as such. His views supported admirably the needs of the benevolent empire, but moralism has always tended to deteriorate the cloth of piety, which is the seamless robe of adornment for the church. Those near to Finney had similar views. For instance, Asa Mahan could describe the church and ministry in these terms:

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[76] Finney, Lectures on Systematic Theology (1846), p. 177.

> Now here is my ideal of what the church is, according to the fundamental design of her constitution. As an association her proper designation is "The Do-right Association." In all the varied circles, relations, and conditions of our existence, wherever the distinctions of right and wrong exist, there is the proper field for her inquiries for the purpose of distinguishing the right from the wrong, and of performing the one and avoiding the other, and of bringing all the world to do the same. Whatever, in any relations bears the sacred name of duty, falls within the sphere of her diligent investigations, influence, and action. The ministry is appointed for the express purpose of aiding believers in their researches in all these conditions and relations, and of influencing them and the world to a full discharge of duty in its most extensive signification.[77]

The shift from piety to moralism, a transition carefully traced in the New England theology by Joseph Haroutunian, was achieved to a notable degree in Finney's thought, and in the theological norms of the benevolent empire.[78] In fact, Finney's moralism was a particular instance of the "main drift" of religion in America. As William Lee Miller has skillfully generalized:

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[77] Asa Mahan, "The Church a Universal Reform Society," The Oberlin Evangelist, VI, No. 15 (July 7, 1844), 171.

[78] Cf. Joseph Haroutunian, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

> In the main drift of religion in America the theological and liturgical and mystical and contemplative move into the background; the hierarchical and communal give place to the individualistic, the traditional to the immediate, the authoritative to the freely decided, the appeal to the mind and the aesthetic sense to the appeal to the will, the awareness of the ultimate to the concern with the practical life. The penumbra of beyondness, absoluteness, and mystery fades away, and leaves--as the core of what Americans think religion to be--the moral.[79]

Although Finney, himself, had many mystical experiences, the most notable of which was his conversion, his theology of disinterested and universal benevolence steadfastly by-passed any aspect of passivity in religion to a rigorous activism. This may be illustrated by his peroration on regeneration, at the close of his *Lectures on Systematic Theology* (1846):

> Hence the bible enjoins it as an imperative duty to know ourselves whether we are christians. We are to know each other by our fruits. This is expressly given in the bible as the rule of judgment in the case. The question is not so much what are the man's opinions as what does he live for? Does he endeavor to promote true religion, love to God and man? Does he manifest the attributes of benevolence in the various circumstances in which he is placed? O when shall the folly of judging men more by their opinions and feelings than by the tenor of their lives cease? It seems difficult to rid men of the prejudice that religion consists in feelings and in experiences, in which they are altogether passive. Hence they are continually prone to delusion upon the most momentous

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[79] William Lee Miller, "American Religion and American Political Attitudes," *Religious Perspectives in American Culture*, Volume II, *Religion in American Life*, edited by James Ward Smith and A. Leland Jamison (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1961), p. 94.

> of all questions. Nothing can break this spell but the steady and thorough inculcation of the truth in regard to the nature of regeneration.[80]

Religion does not consist in passive feelings and experiences but in the manifestation of the attributes of benevolence in every aspect of one's life. This view must be judged dynamic or activistic, and again the suitability of Finney's theology for the benevolent empire is noted. But, however, when this view was yoked with his view of the church as a reform association, a fault is observed.[81] The "new measures" for the promotion of revivals ostensibly provided the means for the reform of individuals; but what were the means that the church was to use in the reform of communities, and governments? It would seem that Finney believed that if individuals were converted, the reform of communities and governments would follow. But then, he also encouraged his converts to associate themselves with the reform societies; he proposed no alternative to these extra-church societies for reform.

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[80] Finney, Lectures on Systematic Theology (1846), p. 587.

[81] It will be remembered that Finney's view of the church was that its great business was to reform the world. "The Christian church," he wrote, "was designed to make aggressive movements in every direction--to lift up her voice and put forth her energies against iniquity in high and low places--to reform individuals, communities, and governments . . . until every form of iniquity shall be driven from the earth." Finney, "Letters on Revivals, No. 23," The Oberlin Evangelist, VIII, No. 2 (January 21, 1846), p. 11.

This failure to conceptualize adequate structures within which the church might carry on its mission of reform was an inherent weakness of the voluntary association view of the church. It is argued here that such a non-organic view of the church, for all its successes in stimulating some of the individual Christian virtues, was severely limited as a social force. With a view to social change, to use sociological terminology, this theory proved to be dysfunctional rather than functional. The voluntary principle tends to define not only a theory of the church, but a theory of the relationship of religion to society. It is a theory which must be defined with such terms as moralistic, individualistic, voluntaristic, and idealistic. When problems of power were confronted, such a theory had little to provide for a church ostensibly "designed to make aggressive movements in every direction." When one ponders the interaction of church and society in nineteenth century America, he is struck by the similarity of the theory described above to that held by most Americans.[82] It is concluded that the failure of popular evangelical religion, in which Finney was a dominant figure, to develop adequate ecclesiastical structures to confront the citadels of power led to a secularizing of the church as a reform association.

In his study of the sociology of American religion, David

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82. Cf. William Lee Miller, op. cit., p. 92.

O. Moberg has said, "The Church tends to become an instrument of society more than an institution transcending all that is secular."[83] As the mission of the church was streamed through the agencies of the benevolent empire it was inevitable that a shift toward secularism should occur. A case in point is the course of the antislavery crusade so carefully studied by Barnes. He identified the antislavery impulse provided by the revivals, and the gradual transition to political activity on the secular front. In The Junius Tracts, Calvin Colton wrote, "Nearly all the political Abolitionists, and with scarcely an exception, all the abolitionist preachers, lecturers, and missionaries, are religious men. It is indeed, a proper religious enterprise. In this statement we have disclosed A GREAT "IMPORTANT" MOMENTOUS FACT." Then Junius argued against this movement of "The Abolition Church" as a threatening aspect of the union of Church and State.[84] In an earlier work Colton had analyzed the political tendencies of the benevolent societies; he suggested a movement from the religious and moral to the political sphere.

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83. David O. Moberg, The Church as a Social Institution, The Sociology of American Religion (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1962), p. 185.

84. /Calvin Colton/, The Junius Tracts (New York: Greeley & McElrath, 1844), pp. 13, 14-15. Colton's judgment is not discussed here, but his observation is thought to give evidence of the tendency toward secularism.

> In the next place, we have found it necessary, in the exhibit we have made of the political machinery of the Abolition movement, to enquire into its origin; and it will be manifest to all, that it was brought from the religious world. The fact, that the model of the American Antislavery Society was borrowed from the Religious and Benevolent Society system, could not implicate those institutions, in the estimation of the public, unless they should see fit to follow the same example, and as far as they might do it, by going over from the religious and moral, into the political sphere; which, we trust, they will be wise enough not to do.[85]

It seems clear that the theory of the church as a reform association operating through the benevolent empire exposed the church to the erosion of moralism and secularism. At the same time, the high-church movement opened the rising denominations to the inherent problems of institutionalism. In both of these cases the interaction of church and society became the matrix in which occurred the socialization of a common pattern of ideals that is denominated "The American Way of Life."[86]

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[85] /Calvin Colton/, Abolition a Sedition (Philadelphia: Geo. W. Donohue, 1839), p. vi.

[86] Ralph H. Gabriel has analyzed what he calls the "American Democratic Faith" in his excellent study, The Course of American Democratic Thought, Second Edition (New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1940). Cf. "Intellectual Patterns" in the Appendix of this thesis. Further, it may be argued that, in the unfolding of this pattern of the church as a reform association, the secular configuration was more viable than the spiritual in culture. Hence, the trend toward institutionalization and secularization continued. However, personal religion was strong in the Finney tradition, and certainly continued past the close of the period of the "Evangelical United

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C. The Kingdom of Christ and the Reformation of Society

1. The Kingdom of Christ and the Business of the Saints

The mirror image of the relationship between the Church and the benevolent empire, in the thought of Charles G. Finney, was the relationship between the Kingdom of Christ and the reformation of society. The relationship between the Kingdom of Christ and the reformation of society was expressed in terms of moral government, the necessity of regeneration, and the demands of disinterested benevolence.

For Finney, following along the paths marked by Edwards and Hopkins, faith in divine sovereignty was expressed in terms of "moral government." This moral government was exercised through the moral law. All law was defined as A RULE OF ACTION."[87] Physical law was that "order of sequence, in all the changes that occur under the law of necessity, 'whether in matter or mind." As such, the physical law was a "law of

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(Cont.) Front (1790-1837)." Foster's analysis neglects the inter-denominational and non-denominational character of later revivals. The "benevolent empire" continued after the close of the "Evangelical United Front," but with diminished support and effectiveness. Griffin's analysis neglects the religious dimension and sees only the economic and political motifs. This is a result of an emphasis upon the secularization which discounts the earlier pervasive motivation of evangelical Christianity which reinforced the cultural enterprise. Finney's views must be placed somewhere between the "churchly" and the "secular" patterns.

[87] Finney, Lectures on Systematic Theology (1846), p. 1.

force" as opposed to the "law of liberty."[88] Moral law, on the other hand, was understood as a rule of moral action with sanctions." It was "that rule of action to which moral beings are under a moral obligation to conform all their voluntary actions, and is enforced by sanctions equal to the value of the precept."[89] Finney emphasized that this law was the "law of liberty" as opposed to the "law of necessity." It was the rule for the direction of free will, "*and strictly of free will only*."[90] The relationship of this differentiation between physical law and moral law was of one piece with the distinction between "natural ability" and "natural inability." "To talk of inability to obey *Moral Law*," wrote Finney, "is to talk sheer nonsense."[91] Again following Edwards and Hopkins, he equated obedience to the moral law as love, or benevolence: "'Thou shalt *love*,' or be *perfectly benevolent*, is its uniform, and its only demand."[92]

To be "perfectly benevolent," however, was a requirement leveled "to the present capacity of every human being." God does not require as much of men as of angels, of a child as a man, or of a half-idiot as of a Newton.[93] Thus, it must be noted, there was an interesting relationship established between perfection and the capacity of each individual; a relationship further established in his juxtaposition of "the idea of perfect, universal and constant consecration of the whole being, to the highest good of being," to the attribute of expediency--"that which is upon the whole expedient is demanded by Moral Law."[94] Finney believed that it was self-evident, "from our own consciousness," that God is a Moral Governor; therefore, "as our good and his glory depend upon our conformity to the same rule, to which He conforms his whole being, he is under a moral obligation to require us to be holy as he is holy."[95]

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[88] *Ibid*.

[89] *Ibid*., p. 2.

[90] *Ibid*.

[91] *Ibid*., p. 4.

[92] *Ibid*., p. 5.

It is clear that for Finney the sovereignty of God was exercised through the moral law of his kingdom, which respected the degrees of capacity of his subjects. This "metaphysical" view, as Finney liked to call it, was the ground of his proclamation of the Kingdom of Christ. "The simple idea of this kingdom," exclaimed Finney, "is that Christ himself reigns in the hearts of his people, securing the perfect submission of the will, and the consecration of every power to himself."[96] This rule of Christ in the hearts of men was the primary attribute of conversion, by which one becomes a subject of this "invisible kingdom." "The subjects of this Kingdom," remarked Finney, "are shut up to no particular location. Each in the sphere where providence has called him to reside and do his master's will, may there be truly a member of this invisible kingdom. Christ may be reigning over him, and he may be indeed a subject and a citizen of this kingdom of God."[97]

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[93] Ibid., p. 8.

[94] Ibid., pp. 12, 13.

[95] Ibid., p. 19.

But the kingdom of Christ must become visible, and it is the business of the saints to make it so. Indeed, conversion implies not only the invisible rule of Christ in the heart, but the external manifestation of the fruits of righteousness in actual social life. Regeneration, which Finney equated with conversion, meant precisely a turning from the self to the interests of the kingdom. This may be clearly seen in his definition of regeneration:

> Regeneration, to have the characteristics ascribed to it in the bible, must consist in a change in the attitude of the will, or a change in its ultimate choice, intention, or preference; a change from selfishness to benevolence, from choosing self-gratification as the supreme and ultimate end of life to the supreme and ultimate choice of the highest well-being of God and of the universe; from a state of entire consecration to self-interest, self-indulgence, self-gratification for its own sake or

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[96] Finney, "Seeking the Kingdom of God First," A Sermon, The Oberlin Evangelist, VII, No. 18 (August 27, 1845), 137.

[97] Ibid.

> as an end, and as the supreme end of life to a state of entire consecration to God and to the interests of his kingdom as the supreme and ultimate end of life.[98]

The business of the saints, thus regenerated, was "to set up and organize the visible kingdom of God on earth."[99]

Recognizing that Finney did not systematize his theology until he began lecturing in Oberlin, one is led to ask if this view of the relationship of conversion to the coming of the kingdom of Christ antedates the Oberlin period, with its particular emphasis upon benevolence and perfectionism. A careful review of the Lectures on Revivals of Religion (1835) reveals the same contours of thought. The necessity of regeneration is emphasized as the proper goal in the promotion of revivals. "*Conversion, or regeneration*," writes Finney, "*is the work of man* . . . . God commands you to make you a new heart, expects you to do it; and, if ever it is done, you must do it."[100] "It is the great business on earth of every Christian," remarked Finney, "to save souls." This is to say, that conversion rests ultimately upon the individual's own will, but Christians are responsible for using the right means to that end. This is the proper work of "building up the Kingdom of

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[98] Finney, Lectures on Systematic Theology (1846), p. 496.

[99] *Ibid.*, p. 552.

[100] Finney, Lectures on Revivals of Religion (edition cited, p. 197.

Christ." Hence, "If you do not make it a matter of study, how you may most successfully act in building up the Kingdom of Christ, you are acting a very wicked and absurd part as a Christian."[101] In another place Finney enunciates a strong doctrine of the priesthood of believers, which locates the responsibility of every christian in the total benevolent enterprise of the church and kingdom.

> Every man is bound to serve God in his calling; the minister by teaching; the merchant by selling goods; the farmer by tilling his fields; and the lawyer and the physician by plying the duties of their professions. . . . All they do is to be for God, and all they earn, after comfortably supporting their families, is to be dedicated to the spread of the Gospel and the salvation of the world.
>
> It has long enough been supposed that ministers must be more pious than other men, that they must live as frugally as possible, and lay out their whole time, and health, and strength, and life, to build up the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. This is true. But although other men are not called to labour in the same field, and to give up their time to public instruction, yet they are just as absolutely bound to consider their whole time as God's; and have no more right to love the world, or accumulate wealth, or lay it up for their children, or spend it upon their lusts, than ministers have.[102]

Finney believed and taught that the coming of the kingdom of Christ, which he equated with the millennium, would be the outworking of the conversion of sinners. The millennium, then, must wait upon a "different sort of minister," and "Christians of the right stamp." "The coming of the millennium," said Finney, "depends on having a different sort of ministers, who are more thoroughly educated _for their work_. . . . Such a ministry as is now in the Church will never convert the world, but the world _is to be_ converted, and therefore God intends to have ministers who will do it."[103] Likewise, the church must learn the importance of giving right instruction to new converts if the millennium is to come:

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[101] Ibid., p. 172.

[102] Ibid., pp. 247-248.

> Thus you see that young converts are thrown into the hands of the Church, and it devolves upon the Church to mould them, and form them into Christians of the right stamp. To a large extent, their future comfort and usefulness depend on the manner in which they are instructed at the outset. The future character of the Church, the progress of revivals, the coming of the millennium, depend on right instruction being imparted, and a right direction of thought and life given, to those who are young converts.[104]

Sinners thus converted, and instructed, were to be obedient to the moral law of benevolence as they labored for the coming of the kingdom of Christ. Perhaps the movement of this theme may be most clearly seen in Finney's sermon, "Traditions of the Elders." "The government which God exercises over the universe of mind," said Finney, "is a moral government . . ." "Motives are the grand instruments of moving mind."[105] And then: "Mind is so constituted, that benevolent affections are the sources of happiness. If the benevolence, therefore, which the law requires were universally exercised, and in the degree which the law prescribes, universal good-will, and peace, and joy would fill the earth."[106] Therefore, the Church must enjoin and insist upon the positive character of the law, "as requiring every creature of God to devote all his powers to his service and giving himself up to doing good and promoting the interests of Christ's kingdom."[107]

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[103] _Ibid_., p. 222. It is interesting to note that as Finney wrote these lines in February of 1835, he was making his decision to go to Oberlin in order to educate this new type of revival minister.

[104] _Ibid_., pp. 395-396.

"The government of God . . . is a moral government," said Finney; therefore motives, which are "the grand instruments of moving mind," must be released from the fetters of selfishness and given the perfect freedom of benevolent affections. This conversion was to be accomplished by divine moral suasion. The theory of divine moral suasion teaches:

> 1. That regeneration consists in a change in the ultimate intention or preference of the mind, or in a change from selfishness to disinterested benevolence, and,

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[105] Finney, "Traditions of the Elders," Sermons on Important Subjects, 3rd Edition (New York: J. S. Taylor, 1836), p. 67.

[106] Ibid., pp. 70-71.

[107] Ibid., p. 73. Another type of summary of Finney's view of the coming of the kingdom of Christ is found in H. Richard Niebuhr, The Kingdom of God in America (New York: Willett & Clark, 1937), pp. 155-157.

> 2. That this change is induced and effected by a Divine moral influence; that is, that the Holy Spirit effects it with, through, or by the truth.[108]

The practical importance of this theory was that if sinners are "to be regenerated by the influence of truth, argument, and persuasion, then ministers can see what they have to do, and how it is that they are to be 'workers together with God.'"[109] The extension of this theory was to inform the saints as they set themselves to organize the "visible kingdom of God on earth." "There are two methods," stated an editorial in the Oberlin Evangelist, "by which men seek to govern the world. One, is by physical force, and authority; the other is by moral suasion."[110] Finney believed that the Church had a benevolent responsibility for the social order, and that christians must do something about social problems. But, the agency for reforming society must always be moral suasion, and not coercion.

This meant that the Church must take the right approach with respect to politics. He declined support to any attempts that might result in concerted political action, and warned the ministry to take care in the pulpit. "Do not suppose that I am going to preach a political sermon," asserted Finney, "or that I wish to have you join in getting up a Christian party in politics. No, you must not believe that. But the time has come that Christians must vote for honest men, and take consistent ground in politics. They must let the world see that the Church will uphold no man in office who is known to be a knave, or an adulterer, or a Sabbath-breaker, or a gambler, or a drunkard."[111] This highly individualistic, and idealistic, position of 1835 was slightly modified in his lectures of 1846; but the theory of benevolent moral suasion was upheld.[112] Finney asserted that in a popular government, politics are an indispensable part of religion. "No man can possibly be benevolent or religious," he wrote, "without concerning himself to a greater or less extent with the affairs of human government." To be sure, Christians have something else to do "than to go with a party to do evil, or to meddle with politics in a selfish or ungodly manner. But they are bound to meddle with politics in popular governments, for the same reason that they are bound to seek the universal good of all men."[113]

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[108] Finney, Lectures on Systematic Theology (1846), p. 518.

[109] Ibid., p. 519. Cf. also, pp. 520-531.

[110] "Encouragement to Labor," The Oberlin Evangelist, V, No. 23 (November 8, 1843), 181. If this editorial was not written by Finney, it is, in any case, exactly expressive of his view.

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111. Finney, Lectures on Revivals of Religion (edition cited), p. 297.

112. Finney, Lectures on Systematic Theology (1846), p. 433.

113. Ibid., p. 431.

These words were written while the Church and the nation was being shaken by the antislavery question. The benevolent impulse of Finneyite revivals, and the theory of moral suasion which was advocated, was giving way to more direct political action in the abolition crusade. Nevertheless, Finney remained staunchly intrenched in his rather ambiguous position. Others, like Lewis Tappan, saw more clearly the shifting scene. In 1839 Lewis Tappan wrote in his Journal, "The editor of the Emancipator has come out so distinctly for a new party in politics that I have felt constrained to publish a dissent--mourning over the want of union, and forgetfulness of first principles, of the abolitionist." Further, he stated, "It would appear to multitudes that we had lost our confidence in moral suasion and appeals to the conscience and hearts of men, and our confidence in the God of the oppressed."[114]

That Finney continued to be very cautious about political involvements, in spite of his statement of 1846, is demonstrated by the implications of a letter from the Oberlin faculty during his second visit to England in 1859-1860. Writing to their president, the faculty stated:

> Some of your remarks have seemed to preclude Christians, or at least ministers, from active participation in politics.

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[114] Lewis Tappan, Journal, November 14, 1839 (p. 106), Tappan Papers, Library of Congress.

> On this point, let us speak our views freely. We are Christian citizens; have Christian duties towards our government; we feel bound to use our best endeavors to promote the election of good rulers to imbue the public mind with just principles in politics. Such are our views. It is due to the solemnity of our earnest convictions and is demanded by our self respect, that we carry them out. We decry the miserable fooleries and abhor the corruptions that are often mixed up with the working of political parties. We discountenance them to the utmost. We aim and labor to throw the power of an elevated and earnest Christianity into the domain of politics. Our past efforts to this end, seem to have been not in vain.[115]

As the revival cycle began to wane, and the benevolent empire moved from moral suasion to political coercion, especially in the antislavery movement, much of the optimism concerning the coming of the kingdom of Christ and the reformation of society was attenuated. The editor of the Oberlin Evangelist gave wistful expression to these trends in 1839:

> The present century has been gloriously distinguished as an era of benevolent and revival action. The dazzling splendor of these movements and the bustling scenes of this labor have drawn many christians away from deep communion with their own hearts, and with the Spirit of God. In this respect none can doubt that piety has assumed a new type since the days of our fathers. There is more of external action and doing, but far less of heart-watchfulness, the subdueing of sin, and holy communion with the Spirit. Is it strange that under such influences, the standard of holiness should be depressed?[116]

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[115] Oberlin Faculty (signed: John Keep, John Morgan, Henry Cowles, E. H. Fairchild) to Finney, July 21, 1860, Finney Papers, OCL.

[116] "Editorial," The Oberlin Evangelist, I, No. 2 (January 1, 1839), 11.

2. The Millennium and the Reformation of Society

The "era of good feeling" that followed the unfortunate War of 1812 was inbreathed with a spirit of optimism unprecedented in American history. The flourishing of commerce and religious fervor, a response to the growing power of the Second Great Awakening, and the rushing enthusiasm engendered by the westward moving frontier stimulated patterns of radical utopianism and ultraism, which erupted in the late 1830's and 1840's.[117] Lewis Tappan was, in many ways, representative of the men of commerce who, imbued with this spirit of optimism, threw himself into the reforms of his age. In 1814 he wrote to his brother, Benjamin Tappan:

> Take away R[eligion] and what prevents the mass of people from violating the laws of God or man? There may be some, philosophical enough to be moral enough without the sanctions of R[eligion] but the generality want its commands to regulate their conduct. It is certainly an admirable code for civil society, and although made to wear a thousand deformities, or suffer distortions inumerable, I believe to the man who will patiently attend to it, brush away the additions and search for its original features, it will be a super-human system.
>
> Now for a theme, on which you will allow me to be warm. "What is a nation's grandeur?" I answer--it is a power, a knowledge, elevated sentiment, encouragement of arts and sciences, wise laws, well directed industry, and virtuous community. Whence

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[117] Cf. Whitney R. Cross, The Burned-Over District; The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1950), p. 325f.

> did America derive these? From commerce!! The wealth it brought gave power, the unexampled commercial enterprise has given us knowledge, the works of foreign sages has furnished us with wise laws--inspired us with a love of liberty, intercourse with other nations has added many improvements to our pursuits--the examples of other countries has taught us to shun the rocks on which they have split and made us virtuous. I wish not to disparage Agriculture. They are twin sisters. The valour and skill of Americans has resounded through the universe--credit commerce with this. The obligations of all classes to commerce are a national debt with a gratuitous interest. The spirits of Gibbon, Hume, Voltaire, Rousseau, Bollingbroke, Swift, Pope, Shakespeare, Blackstone, Angelo, Reynolds, will rise up in judgment against you if you decry commerce--it has introduced those gentlemen to you. . . . America is a grand and happy people.[118]

This was the Lewis Tappan who became so closely connected with Finney and the reformation of society.

In studying the manifestations of social reform, it becomes clear that the paths to radical utopianism were laid across the landscape scorched by the unquenched craving for social reconstruction and the wildfire of revivals that swept America in the late 1820's and early 1830's. The similarity between these two movements did not escape the attention of John Humphrey Noyes, who noted that each had two great leaders: Nettleton and Finney led the religious revivals; Owen and Fourier, interjected (by proxy) the virus of Utopianism into the American imagination.[119] Robert Allerton Parker, in his study of Noyes and the Oneida Community, has established the alternating relationship of revivals and social reform: he explained,

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[118] Lewis Tappan to Benjamin Tappan, Esq., March 21, 1814, Lewis Tappan Papers, Library of Congress.

> The religious movement and the social movement, as Noyes surveyed them, seemed to alternate. Neither seemed able to rivet the attention of the public at one and the same time. Between 1831 and 1834, the American people seemed on the point of surrendering all earthly ties for the Kingdom of Heaven. A decade later (1843-53), Fourier, with his enticing picture of an earthly paradise, awakened new hopes. Hypnotized by the siren song of Fourier's apostle, Albert Brisbane, the credulous felt that they stood at the threshold of a new Age of Harmony.[120]

The optimism and Millennial fervor of Finney's Oberlin was mid-course between the earlier cultural optimism inculcated during the "era of good feelings" and the radical utopianism of Noyes, and others. Finney's particular emphasis related the millennium to revivals. "If the whole Church, as a body, had gone to work ten years ago," he wrote in 1835, "and continued it as a few individuals, whom I could name, have done, there might not now have been an impenitent sinner in the land. The millennium would have fully come into the

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[119] Cf. Robert Allerton Parker, *A Yankee Saint, John Humphrey Noyes and the Oneida Community* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1935), p. 146.

[120] *Ibid.* Finney had been one of the great heroes of Noyes' youth, but Noyes felt that Oberlin Perfectionism was too tame and ineffectual. ~~Cf.~~ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

United States before this day."[121] A further speculation was this: "If the Church will do all her duty, the millennium may come in this country in three years."[122] Among the purposes given for the establishment of the Oberlin Evangelist was this one: "To call the attention of Christians to the fact that the Millennium is to consist in the entire sanctification of the Church."[123] The scheme of Finney's thought, then, seems to be this. The first work of the Church is the conversion of sinners. Conversion, or regeneration, implies a new spirit of disinterested benevolence, a spirit which works inwardly toward a supreme consecration of the will to God (sanctification) and outwardly toward the reformation of the world in all of its elements. Hence, the entire sanctification of the Church implies the Millennium, the coming of Christ's kingdom through his perfect rule in the hearts of men.

The Millennium, then, was a composite of regeneration, sanctification, and the reformation of society. And, as in all of Finney's thought, the accent fell upon the human agency and not upon the direct instrumentality of God. This Oberlin view of the Millennium was enunciated by Henry Cowles in a series of articles in the Oberlin Evangelist in 1841. The language of the following quotation substantiates the analysis given above:

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[121] Finney, Lectures on Revivals of Religion (edition cited), p. 305.

[122] Ibid., p. 306.

[123] The Oberlin Evangelist, I, No. 1 (November 1, 1838), 8.

> It is generally admitted that the Church during the Millenium [sic] will be vastly more holy--that is more benevolent and active for God than she is now. Yet many suppose that this improvement need not take place before the Millenium, but will rather be the result of the Millenium than its instrumental cause. They think God will bring in the Millenium by a sort of miracle, and chiefly without human agency . . . . Now all this is a sad, dreadful mistake. Were it believed and acted on by the whole Church, we should never have a Millenium to the end of time.[124]

In a letter to James Monroe, of Oberlin, W. B. Orvis, a Congregational minister, included a brochure of reviews of his book, Christ Coming in His Kingdom: A Refutation of Millennarianism, and an Unfolding of the Latter-Day Glory of Zion. In one of the reviews, Finney wrote favorably of the book as containing the view that the Millennium is the time when, as the result of Christian labor, the world shall be won to Christ.[125]

Finney's optimism and his millennial perspective may be traced through the Edwardean tradition, but first it should be noted that his optimism was, in general, a prevailing characteristic of the age. For instance, John Bodo has found a similar millennial perspective among his theocrats:

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[124] "The Millenium (sic)," The Oberlin Evangelist, III, No. 14 (July 7, 1841), 110.

[125] W. B. Orvis to James Monroe, January 18, 1871, Monroe Papers, OCL.

> Samuel S. Schmucker, the Lutheran theocrat, found the Sabbath School system "admirable adapted to train up a generation of Christians for millennial plans and millennial action," since "in that halcyon day of millennial triumph the minor peculiarities of sect will be thrown into the background, and Christians meet on the broad platform of the Bible . . . ." Mark Hopkins, the illustrious President of Williams College, concluded that three things were clearly indicative of the coming of the millennium: "the subjugation of the powers of nature to the use of man"; "the attempt to realize . . . the liberty and rights of the individual man"; and the "benevolent and reformatory movements" of the age. These phenomena, he believed were "a natural, and almost necessary, preparation for the final triumph." There was no doubt in the minds of the theocrats that the working out of their pattern for America, and through America for the world, was laying the groundwork for the Second Advent.[126]

When one contemplates the severe, almost unadorned, nature of Finney's anthropocentric view of the millennium, he must immediately question the statement that this view bears any relationship to that of Jonathan Edwards, who, though almost intoxicated with the expectation of the coming millennium, insisted that no man may make a timetable for God. Edwards believed that the millennial victory was to be won gradually, and he was content to wait upon the Lord, believing in the certainty of the coming of his kingdom and relishing the intimations of its nearness. But, he did make a new departure in the Calvinistic tradition by adopting a postmillennial view which was open to the influences of a vigorous cultural optimism.

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[126] John R. Bodo, *op. cit.*, p. 252.

Edwards shared Calvin's beliefs concerning the eternal order of the universe under the divine sovereignty, but his views with respect to the millennium were decisively different.[127] Calvin rejected all chiliastic notions as an impoverishment of the Christian hope. Perhaps as a reaction to the left wing of the Reformation, the Genevan reformer seldom used the word "millennium" except as a symbolic word understood in a highly spiritualized sense. "Calvin thought the people of God," wrote Goen, "were destined to wander as pilgrims on the earth until the end of time."[128] Likewise, the Westminster Confession was silent upon the subject of the millennium, as were all of the historic creeds of Christendom before it. It may be judged that the orthodox tradition was, in the main, amillennial. But Edwards lived in a theological milieu informed by the Saybrook Platform, which established the Westminster standards in Connecticut through the recensions of the Cambridge Platform and the Savoy Declaration.

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[127] This discussion has been greatly aided by the competent studies of C. C. Goen in his article, "Jonathan Edwards: A New Departure in Eschatology," Church History, XXVIII, No. 1 (March, 1959), 25-40, and James William Lee, "The Development of Theology at Oberlin" (Typed Ph.D. thesis, Drew University, 1952), passim.

[128] C. C. Goen, op. cit., p. 34.

It was this latter creed, which in 1658 contained the first statement by any confessional group embodying definite millennial presuppositions.[129] It was Edwards who gave a more radical development to the implications of the millennium.

Going against the opinions of Reformed theology during the past two centuries, Edwards assigned the darkest days of the Christian Church to the past and the coming of Christ to the close of the millennium. This postmillennial view was an innovation that translated fear, concerning the approach of the end of the age, into a buoyant enthusiasm which encouraged Christian labor for the coming of the kingdom. This circumspect view of the millennium prevailed in the hopeful days of the Great Awakening. The followers of Edwards, Joseph Bellamy, Jonathan Edwards, Jr., Timothy Dwight, and Samuel Hopkins, enunciated this same scheme; but with an important shift of view with regard to his stern eschatological dualism. Samuel Hopkins, in the train of Bellamy, asserted the premise, "In which it is proved from Scripture, that the Church of Christ is to come to a state of prosperity in this world, which it has never yet enjoyed; in which it will continue at least a thousand years."[130] He asserted that the millennium is real, but that scriptural expressions concerning it are figurative. Christ does not return bodily, but rules in the heart of the saints most perfectly.[131] The Church of Christ will be regulated "in the most beautiful and pleasing order"; and "Christianity will appear in its true beauty and excellence, and the nature and genuine effects of it will be more manifest . . ."[132] And now, this important statement: the millennial age will be in an eminent sense and degree "the day of salvation."[133]

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[129] Ibid.

[130] Samuel Hopkins, A Treatise on the Millennium, (Showing from Scripture Prophecy, That it is yet to come; When it will come; In what it will come to; and the events which are to take place, introductory to it), in The System of Doctrines, 2nd edition, 2 volumes (Boston, 1811), p. 418.

The eschatological dualism of Edwards, with its stern doctrine of eternal punishment for all those but the relativ-ely few who are saved, was powerfully challenged by the rising tide of Universalist sentiment. Both Bellamy and Hopkins attempted to remold the millennial view about the proposition that the greater number of the human race would be saved, because of the accelerating rate of conversions associated with the millennium. Again, as Hopkins put it, the millennium would be "the day of salvation." Precisely at this point, the postmillennial tradition of Edwards became open to the liberalizing effect of the flow of ideas which arose out of the matrix of the radical emphasis upon human ability.

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[131] *Ibid.*, p. 451.

[132] *Ibid.*, pp. 473, 474.

[133] *Ibid.*, p. 476.

With Finney, the millennium was associated with an optimistic activism, which through its zeal to convert and reform the world became entangled, then merged, with the secularization of the millennial hope. Indeed, it may be argued that Finney's tendency to fuse conversion, sanctification, moral reformation, and the millennium with the doctrine of human ability and agency led to the popular concept that men create the Church, and the kingdom of Christ. This scheme was well along the road to religion as the American way of life, a culture-bound, no longer a prophetic, Christianity. Finney was on the razor's edge of the traditional ministry, portrayed in the Federalist era, and the demagogic preachers of the Jacksonian era. He embodied the shift from an emphasis upon the pastoral ministry to that of the itinerant evangelist. Just as the benevolent empire tended to divorce reform from the Church, so revivalism removed evangelism from the province of the pastor. After the close of the Civil War, the impact of science and naturalism hastened the secularization process already operating; and with the rise of sociology the reform activity of the Church was exercised in the Social Gospel.[134]

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[134] Sidney E. Mead has traced the movement of revivalism and denominationalism to "Americanism" (after the Civil War) in The Lively Experiment: The Shaping of Christianity in America (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), especially pp. 124, /126-27,

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(Cont.) 126-27, 132ff. Samuel Harris has shown the impact of science and naturalism upon religion, directly after 1865 in The Kingdom of Christ on Barth (Andover: Draper Publishers, 1874), passim. Kenneth Scott Latourette has summarized the general movement of activistic and radical Protestantism in these words: "Out of this activism many movements for social betterment arose, primarily from the radical Anglo-Saxon Protestantism which strove, sometimes with marked success, to alter society. Revivalism was prominent. It sought to win all to a Christian faith and so tended to make Christianity conterminous with the country rather than the possession of minorities. The majority of those of Calvinist background moved away from some of the features of that system towards a confidence in man's free will, in his ability to accept the salvation offered by God, and in his capacity for improvement both individually and collectively. It was largely from those of Calvinist antecedents that the reform movements and the social gospel sprang. Many individuals went over to an extreme humanism." The Great Century, A.D. 1800-A.D. 1914 (New York: Harper & Bros., 1941), p. 455. Timothy L. Smith has argued that the roots of the Social Gospel are found in 19th century revivalism in Revivalism and Social Reform in Mid-Nineteenth Century America (New York: Abingdon Press, 1957), passim.

VI. THE CHURCH AS A HOLY COMMUNITY

A. The Church Visible and Invisible

1. The Puritan and Evangelical Views

Just as the doctrine of disinterested benevolence informed Finney's view of the Church as a Reform Association, so the doctrine of perfection informed his view of the Church as a Holy Community. The tendency of the former was toward the support of the benevolent empire, which divorced reform from the Church. The tendency of the latter was toward "ultraism," which divorced sanctification from the main stream of American Church development. These deviations from Finney's stated purposes for the Church resulted from a wave of native radicalism that swept through the ranks of that segment of American society which was most receptive of his ministry. Finney, himself, was infected with this radicalism, and developed a high fever over matters of physiological and spiritual reform. This period of "Oberlin Perfectionism" lasted long enough to elicit further controversy and division in the American Church.

The diversity of opinion concerning the nature of the Church and ministry surging about the life experience of Finney has been a recurring theme. As there is no single view of the Church and ministry common to the American scene, it is necessary to suggest the broad outlines of the traditions from which Finney developed his own line of thought. The three major traditions which have influenced the development of the idea of the Church in America are those inherited from Calvinism, from the Reformation sects, and from the Enlightenment. It is argued here that each of these three traditions contributed to Finney's thought; not directly, but indirectly, as he experienced them intermixed within the culture. From Calvinism came the concept of the Holy Community, in which the visible Church and the state are conterminous. This concept he radically modified in terms of his doctrine of sanctification. From the Reformation sects came the reaction against any established Church, and the idea of religious toleration. Finney reflected this tradition in his attitudes toward the intellectual and ecclesiastical tyranny of the Presbyterian Church and non-sectarianism. From the Enlightenment came an emphasis upon the idea of the Church as a voluntary association. This became the prevailing idea of the Church among most evangelicals of nineteenth century America.[1]

Turning first to the Magisterial Reformation, Luther's incessant stress upon the communio sanctorum is noted. This was the community of holy, pious, believing men on earth, sustained and ruled by the Holy Spirit, and daily increased by the Word and sacraments. The doctrine of the priesthood of all believers was the revolutionary expression of this new concept of the Church.[2] Thus, the Church is both visible and invisible at the same time; transcending all historical occasions and associations precisely because it is the result of the free activity of God, the redemption of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit; but also, it is immanent in all historical occasions and associations as the service of God's Word and Christian love inform them.[3] The social ministry of the Church was expressed in the penetration of the secular orders by the strictly personal virtue of love. The social order was believed to proceed according to its own norms, qualified here and there by the transforming power of Christian love. In this view, the visible Church became a preaching and teaching Church: in which the gospel was rightly preached, and the sacraments rightly administered.[4]

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[1] 1. An interesting discussion of these three traditions is given in Cyril C. Richardson, The Church Through the Centuries (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1938), pp. 222-226.

Calvin's idea of the visible Church was essentially the same, but he gave a new impetus to the concept of the invisible Church with his doctrine of the sovereignty of God. The true Church was the Church of the elect known only to God.

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[2] Wilhelm Pauck, "The Idea of the Church in Christian History," Church History, XXI, No. 3 (September, 1952), 209.

[3] Ibid., pp. 209-210.

[4] Ibid., p. 211.

But then, his Biblicism and magnification of Old Testament piety transformed the communio sanctorum into a group of disciplined Christians under the regnum Christi. This was nothing less than the establishment of the Church as a new Christian social order, in which the citizens were under the discipline and order of the Church for the purpose of living their whole lives as obedient to the law of Christ, which is the law of the Bible.[5] Calvin's theory explicitly called for careful distinctions between the Church and the state, but did not prevent him from advocating a Christian commonwealth in Geneva, subordinated to the sovereign will of God. In this, he followed the example of his friend and teacher, Martin Bucer of Strassburg.[6] These were the views of the Church that informed the Puritan "errand into the wilderness."

Jonathan Edwards' doctrine of the Church stressed the sovereignty of God in the orders of creation, in which the elect were understood as the prime objects of creation. The elect were chosen as a part of Christ in the "covenant of redemption." The Church is elect mankind and the body of Christ; hence the Church was understood to be a universal and not merely a collection of particulars.[7] God's purpose in creation, according to Edwards, was to be realized inwardly in true virtue (i.e., "benevolence to Being in general") but outwardly in the manifestations of the work of redemption. "The Church, heavenly and earthly," writes Schafer of Edwards' view, "is the kingdom of God."[8] Here, again, is seen Edwards' millennial expectation related to work of redemption manifest in the Great Awakening. His definition of a particular church as "a company of God's worship and service" was congenial to those participating in the unfolding of Congregational patterns of polity and unity.[9] These patterns embodied Edwards' belief in the making visible the unity of the Church in more comprehensive organic structures. His preference for presbyterian over congregational polity, and his active support of united prayer for the unity of the Church opened the way for the Plan of Union of 1801, between Congregational and Presbyterian Churches on the frontier.[10]

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[5] Ibid.

[6] Bucer, in his last work, De regno Christi, which was written in Cambridge for Edward VI in 1551, "proclaimed the Christianization of all political, social, economic and cultural life in terms of a republica Christiana which for him was identified with the Kingdom of God." Ibid., p. 212.

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[7] Thomas A. Schafer, "Jonathan Edwards' Conception of the Church," Church History, XXIV, No. 1 (March, 1955), 52-55.

[8] Ibid., p. 56.

[9] Ibid., pp. 56-57.

[10] Schafer discusses Edwards' pioneer efforts in the establishment of stated times of prayer for unity among the Churches, that the international character which the Church will manifest in the millennium may be increasingly exhibited. Ibid., p. 57.

With the disestablishment of the Church in the early 1800's, under the impact of Enlightenment and Republican thought, and the development of the left-wing Reformation traditions in America, the voluntary principle became the guideline for religious community. Other features of the environment also modified the inherited traditions. Philip Schaff reported to his German audience:

> America seems destined to be the Phenix grave not only of all European nationalities . . . but also of all European churches and sects, of Protestantism and Romanism. I cannot think, that any one of the present confessions and sects, the Roman, or the Episcopal, or the Congregational, or the Presbyterian, or the Lutheran, or the German or Dutch Reformed, or the Methodist, or the Baptist communion, will ever become exclusively dominant there; but rather, that out of the mutual conflict of all something wholly new will gradually arise.[11]

Because of the fact that few American theologians gave any major attention to ecclesiology, the shaping of American religion was largely the effect of influences external to the Church. The Evangelical and revivalistic piety of Finney was especially open to the spirit of the age.

The quest for a Christian America, so fervently undertaken during the era of the benevolent empire, has been shown to have changed from moral suasion, by which society would be permeated with the leaven of Christianity, to coercion. Crucial differences in theology and social philosophy, between the orthodoxy of the theocrats and the radical thought and action of the New School men, began to appear. The increase of the associative and individualistic over the community aspects of American life was a feature of this differentiation. For instance, John R. Bodo has pointed out:

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[11] Philip Schaff, America. A Sketch of Its Political, Social, and Religious Character (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961), pp. 80-81.

> There is, then, a basic agreement among the critics and opponents of the theocratic pattern, in spite of their own political, social, and religious diversity. . . . They were all representatives of a changing, dynamic community, upon which the theocrats attempted to impose a more or less static pattern. Their thinking was individualistic, whereas the theocrats thought in terms of society, particularly in terms of the nation, of its divine mission and destiny.[12]

As the older sense of community was replaced with individualism and the rise of an associative view of society, the churches, as has been discussed, tended to become acculturated. Robert T. Handy, thinking within a larger frame of reference, has made this statement, which embodies the same conclusion.

> The associative nature of society in combination with the tendency of churches to identify themselves with the interests of the folk they serve contributed to the peculiar situation of American Protestantism, whereby the churches became entangled in cultural, racial, and class barriers instead of transcending them. Protestantism hoped to permeate and Christianize a society; instead she was partly enveloped by it.[13]

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[12] John R. Bodo, The Protestant Clergy and Public Issues, 1812-1848 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954), pp. 29-30.

[13] Robert T. Handy, "The Protestant Quest for a Christian America 1830-1930," Church History, XXII, No. 1 (March, 1953), 16.

If this general line of analysis is followed, with Finney as a particular case, some of the sociological implications of his idea of the Church come into view. It cannot be doubted that Finney, by intellect and temperament, was an anti-theocrat; yet he invisioned, with the greatest optimism, the reformation of the world through a universal benevolent spirit arising out of conversion. This anomaly has already been discussed, and his view has been traced to the Edwardean tradition with its particular millennial hope. But the Great Awakening, and the Second Awakening following it, placed the emphasis upon individualism and not upon community. In so far as the Church was contemplated, it was mainly the local church for which concern was exhibited; there was no organic concept of the Church, nor was there any vision of a Holy Community in the traditional Calvinist mode. Robert Hastings Nichols has written of this period: "The Christian life was represented as coming to each man separately by an act of God directed toward him. Great importance was not attached to relation to the church and the influence of the church in making men Christians. . . . Conversion was not something attained in the fellowship of church or family. It was for each man a transaction with God isolated from the rest of life."[14]

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[14] Robert Hastings Nichols, "The Influence of the American Environment on the Conception of the Church in American Protestantism," Church History, XI, No. 3 (September, 1942), 184.

With the development of the voluntary association principle, coupled with Finney's anthropocentrism, and added to the prevailing attitudes of a people who were asserting their right to govern themselves, we have a matrix of ideas and attitudes out of which came the popular idea of the Church. Robert Hastings Nichols has stated it this way: "The church is formed by men and managed by men according to their own ideas: if this is not _the_ great American conception it is certainly _a_ great American conception, widespread and strong."[15]

An extension of this analysis may be located in the social fact of immigration to the frontier, with the accompanying threat of barbarism associated with the dissolution of established community patterns. At the same time, the disestablishment of the Church broke the familiar relationships of Church and society, so that the Church was forced to operate through voluntary and associative schemes for the moral reform and conversion of society. In a very real sense, then, the nineteenth century through the Civil War period was an era during which the old forms of community were dissolved, and a new quest for community had to be undertaken. It is argued here that during the period of Finney's life there existed a state of social disorganization in which the inherited and established social and cultural forms had broken down. In

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15. _Ibid._, p. 190.

this state of existence there was a loss of solidarity, such as characterized the Colonial and Federalist periods. There was also a loss of consensus; that is, the felt agreement upon norms and values, which had provided direction and meaning for life, had been subverted. Now this is the classic pattern of social disorganization which results in a condition of "normlessness" for individuals; a condition which Durkheim called anomie.[16] Since the experience of anomie is frustrating, men seek ways out of their predicament of "normlessness," the most constructive of which is a "quest for community" and a search for new meaning. A tentative judgment at this juncture is that Finney's concept of the Church and ministry was a response to the highly disorganized society in which he lived. His measures for revivals and for universal moral reform were closely related to the needs and aspirations of a rapidly evolving society in which people were greatly affected by the social, economic, and political circumstances in which they were involved. This is not to say that the social conditions were a simple and unique causal element in the revival and reform movements, but they provided the socio-psychic frame of reference for the native radicalism which surged through his ministry.

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[16] Cf. Thomas F. O'Dea's discussion of this phenomenon in The Sociology of Religion (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1966), pp. 56-57.

Further, it may be said that Finney was a classic type of the "charismatic leader." It is readily granted that Weber's treatment of charisma, as it is identified with Durkheim's concept of the "sacred" and Otto's idea of the "holy," is more easily associated with primitive societies. Yet, Weber's definition of charisma was meant to apply to modern societies as well. He defined charisma as ". . . a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities. These are such as are not accessible to the ordinary person, but are regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary, and on the basis of them the individual concerned is treated as a leader."[17] In a disorganized state of society, with its loss of solidarity and consensus, there is a striving for new norms and structures that shall create a more viable sense of community. Finney, with his exceptional powers and qualities, became a charismatic leader of heroic proportions. But, as Weber has pointed out, the charismatic role, because it was out-of-the-ordinary, was not only a source of instability and innovation, it was also a strategic element in

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17. Max Weber, The Theory of Social and Economic Organization (translated by A. M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons), edited by Talcott Parsons (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947), pp. 358-359.

social change. This is certainly true of Finney's life and thought.[18]

It was precisely this combination of instability and innovation which characterized the revival and reform ministry of Finney. And, because charismatic phenomena are unstable and temporary, the reform elements stimulated by innovation can prolong their existence only by becoming routinized in some viable institutionalized structure within society. Hence, it may be argued that Finney's view of the Church as a reform association, and a Holy Community, tended toward ultraism; and, because of his opposition to traditional structures, and the instability of society, it did not have the power to create a viable institutional form. Therefore, revivalism and perfectionism tended to disrupt the traditional denominational churches and became the characteristics of the "sects" which represent the religious ethos of that segment of American society which continued to experience anomie as new constructions of American culture became established. A perusal of a typical classification of sect religion will establish this judgment. Charles S. Braden classified the sect type as follows:

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[18] A helpful discussion of charisma may be found in Thomas F. O'Dea, op. cit., pp. 22-28.

> There are a considerable number of minor churches which are obviously Christian, built about specific ideas or practices common to the larger faiths, but stemming from no particular denomination. They come out from many denominations to form new associations in which particular doctrines or practices not unknown to the major groups are given an exaggerated emphasis.
>
> Here may be classed such a sub-division as the familiar Bible churches--the Pentecostal-holiness-evangelistic sects, the Adventists, the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Four Square Gospel churches, and so forth. Five major points of emphasis may be noted among these: (1) extreme fidelity to Scripture, (2) the millennial hope or expectation, (3) the desire for holiness or entire sanctification, (4) the present experience of Pentecost, or possession by the Holy Spirit, and (5) the stress on evangelism. Not all share all these stresses equally. For example, the sect of Jehovah's Witnesses stresses (1) and (2); the holiness units usually emphasize (2) and (3) on the basis of (1) and (4).[19]

2. The Perfection of the Visible Church

It cannot be said that American Calvinists gave much attention to the doctrine of sanctification. It was the doctrines of election and predestination, and the perseverance of the saints that supported the preaching of the gospel in the American Calvinist tradition of the early nineteenth century. The main concern in the Church in the midst of revivals was the conversion of sinners. Calvin's "third use of the law" (tertius usus legis), by which the laws of God informed the regenerate how to be increasingly sanctified, had drifted into a woeful moralism. The doctrine of perseverance was primarily an instrument to be used against the Wesleyan preaching of the possibility of regenerate Christians "backsliding," and of sanctification as a "second work of grace." It seems to be clear that Finney's attention was drawn to the doctrine of sanctification through his puzzlement over "cold" Christians, those who responded to gospel salvation and then ceased to grow in the Christian life.

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[19] Charles S. Braden, "The Sects," The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, Vol. 256 (March, 1948), 54-55.

The substance of Finney's doctrine of sanctification was presented in two sermons preached at the Broadway Tabernacle, in the winter of 1836-1837. At this time, it will be remembered, he was still pastor of that church under an arrangement by which he allocated his time and energies between Oberlin and New York. These sermons were reported in the New York Evangelist by Leavitt, and subsequently published in the volume Lectures to Professing Christians.[20] George F. Wright comments that these lectures were not the subject of any special criticism at that time.[21] However, Finney's views of sanctification seem to have undergone a change after his removal to Oberlin. At Oberlin, the majority of those to whom he preached were already converted, and it is quite natural that his attention should be drawn to the problem of shaping the Christian character of both the colonists and the students that they might be effective witnesses to their faith. One of "Professor Finney's Letters" in the Oberlin Evangelist, in January of 1839, indicates how his mind had come to center on this doctrine:

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[20] Finney, Lectures to Professing Christians. Delivered in the city of New York, in the years 1836 and 1837 . . . From notes by the editor of the New York Evangelist, revised by the author (New York: John S. Taylor, 1837).

[21] George F. Wright, Charles Grandison Finney (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1891), p. 203.

> When I was first converted, and entered the ministry, my mind was powerfully drawn, as I then thought, and now think, to labor for the conversion of sinners. Upon that one grand object, my heart was set, and to the accomplishment of it, many of you can bear witness, that all my powers were devoted. My study, preaching, prayers, visiting and conversation, were devoted to that end. My mind was, of course, occupied almost exclusively with that class of truths, that were calculated to work the conviction and conversion of the impenitent.
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> . . . .
>
> Believing and feeling as I did then, and do now, that if persons were once converted, God, in faithfulness, would save them, I overlooked the necessity of the constant, and vigorous, and pointed use of means to effect this end.
>
> . . . .
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> Since my own mind became impressed, in the manner in which I have spoken, I have felt as strongly, and unequivocally pressed by the Spirit of God, to labor for the sanctification of the Church, as I once did for the conversion of sinners.[22]

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[22] "Professor Finney's Letter, No. 2," The Oberlin Evangelist, I, No. 4 (January 30, 1839), 25. (The italics are mine.)

As a consequence of his preaching, a number of his best students became profoundly concerned over the question of sanctification. The discussion began to center upon the proposition that if the Christian is perfectly consecrated in his conversion, then he should be able to hope, by the grace of God, to attain an abiding state of consecration.[23] The movement toward the doctrine of "Oberlin Perfectionism" was begun. Finney's first reaction to this proposition was entirely negative. Wright reports that he responded that if they could find a man who was perfectly keeping the commands of God and fully living up to his light, he would creep on his hands and knees all the way to the Atlantic Ocean to see him.[24] Nevertheless, he soon became persuaded that the promises of the Bible pointed to such a state of abiding consecration, and that Christians might, by God's grace, aim at such a condition with the rational hope of attaining it. The Oberlin colony and college was soon on fire with optimistic enthusiasm for a radical doctrine of perfectionism.

It would be erroneous to attribute all developments of Oberlin Perfectionism to Finney. Indeed, Oberlin's first president, Asa Mahan, was already thinking in this direction when Finney arrived on the scene. The year before Finney published his definitive Views of Sanctification, Mahan had published his Scripture Doctrine of Christian Perfection.[25] It may be assumed that the similarity of their points of view are signs of significant interaction within the Oberlin community. The historian of Oberlin College has stated that Mahan was more than anyone else the special sponsor of Oberlin's peculiar theological "heresy" and stand on reform. "It was Mahan," writes Fletcher, "who gave to the Oberlin of 1835 to 1850 much of its peculiar tone of effective--and irritating--aggressiveness."[26] When Mahan was asked to resign in 1850, Oberlin began to move steadily away from radicalism toward moderation; the extreme position taken on Perfectionism was soon a matter for apology.[27] Finney remained a proponent of a strong doctrine of sanctification to the end of his days, but he did not support the ultraism, and "come-outism" which that doctrine elicited in the early Oberlin days.

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[23] Wright, op. cit., p. 204.

[24] Ibid.

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[25] Asa Mahan, Scripture Doctrine of Christian Perfection (Boston: D. S. King Co., 1839).

[26] Robert S. Fletcher, A History of Oberlin College, From Its Foundation Through the Civil War (Oberlin: Oberlin College, 1943), Volume I, p. 472.

[27] Fletcher wrote of Mahan: "There was never any doubt about Mahan's high moral principles, his sincerity, and his devotion to the truth, but out of these virtues grew his chief shortcomings. He was imperious; he was egotistical; he was overbearing; he would brook no opposition nor criticism. In the heat of argument he would often overstep the bounds of good taste and good manners. Mahan was the sort of man who made firm friends and bitter enemies, unfortunately, many of the latter. In Oberlin the number of his enemies grew until they included all of the faculty and many of the trustees and, at last, as a result he was forced to resign." Ibid.

Among the earliest references to sanctification in Finney's thought are those in his "Instruction of Young Converts" in the _Lectures on Revivals of Religion_ (1835). He asserted, "They must be taught _what sanctification is_."[28] Disputing with the Wesleyan doctrine, he said: "They should be taught that sanctification is not something that precedes obedience, some change in the nature or the constitution of the soul. But sanctification is _obedience_, and as a progressive thing consists in obeying God more and more perfectly."[29] Similarly he argued against a popular idea concerning election and perseverance. "It is astonishing how people talk about perseverance," he remarked. "As if the doctrine of perseverance is: 'Once in grace, always in grace'; or, 'Once converted, sure to go to heaven.' This is not the idea of perseverance. The true idea is, that if a man is truly converted, _he will_ CONTINUE _to obey God_; and as a _consequence_, he will surely go to heaven."[30] Very specifically, he instructed converts that they should "_aim at being perfect_." "They _ought not_ to sin at all," he said, "they are bound to be as holy as God is, and young converts should be taught to set out in the right course, or they will never be right."[31] These statements were merely preliminary to the fully drawn enunciation of the Oberlin period.

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[28] Finney, _Lectures on Revivals of Religion_ (edition cited), p. 414.

[29] _Ibid_., pp. 414-415.

[30] _Ibid_., p. 415.

In 1840 Finney published his Views of Sanctification, which may be considered the definitive treatise of the Oberlin theology. The substance of this treatise, according to the preface, had formerly appeared in the Oberlin Evangelist in the form of a course of lectures. It was a tremendous popular demand which encouraged the publishing of the treatise under this title.[32] In his usual pattern of "logical" definition, exposition, and remarks, Finney defined sanctification, entire sanctification, and permanent sanctification. Sanctification, in its simple and primary meaning, is "a state of consecration to God." "A state of sanctification," said Finney, "is a state of consecration, or a being set apart to the service of God."[33] Entire sanctification was understood to be "the consecration of the whole being to God." This is the "state of devotedness" which is required by the moral law. Since the law is perfect, it requires, said Finney, "just what is right, all that is right, and nothing more." "Nothing more or less can possibly be Perfection or entire sanctification, than obedience to the law."[34] Finney allowed, as a certainty, that a person may be for a time wholly consecrated to God, and then diverted from that service; hence, the distinction between entire and permanent sanctification was made. "By *permanent sanctification*," wrote Finney, I understand then a state not only of entire but of perpetual, unending consecration to God."[35]

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[31] Ibid., p. 420. In this paragraph there is an interesting and significant textual variant in the subsequent edition, which reflects the later Oberlin doctrine. It is not noted by the editor. Instead of the following, in the 1835 edition,--"But it is the duty of all to aim at being perfect. It should be their constant purpose, to live wholly to God, and obey all his commandments."--we read in the later edition, "But it is the duty of all to be perfect, and to purpose entire, perpetual, and universal obedience to God."

[32] Finney, Views of Sanctification (Oberlin: James Steele, 1840).

[33] Ibid., pp. 7-8.

Entire sanctification is required by the moral law, and this law of God was epitomized by Christ as love of God and love of man: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength, and thy neighbor as thyself." The question to which Finney then gave his attention was, what is not, and what is implied in perfect obedience to this law? Consistent with his view of "natural ability," which has been presented in connection with its application to the idea of conversion, Finney laid down some "first principles" in regard to the interpretation of

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34. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

35. *Ibid.* (The italics are mine.)

law, in the light of which the implications of "perfect obedience" may be discovered. With absolute confidence he asserted that whatever is "inconsistent with natural justice" cannot be law; whatever is "inconsistent with the nature and relations of moral beings," because it is contrary to natural justice, cannot be law; and, that which requires "more than man has natural ability to perform" is inconsistent with "the nature and relations of moral beings," hence is contrary to "natural justice," and cannot be law. Continuing along this line, he further asserted that laws may not be interpreted as if they implied "any attributes or strength and perfection of attributes which the subject does not possess."[36] This means that the commandment to love the neighbor must be understood only as requiring us "to judge with candor of the relative value of different interests, and treat them according to their value so far as we understand it."[37] This meant that actual knowledge was "indispensable to obligation."[38]

It is not necessary to comment upon the very evident subjective nature of this hermeneutical scheme. But, it is important to point out that Finney did state something of the other side of the issue, though somewhat less clearly; namely, entire sanctification and the sovereign grace of God. He asserted that entire sanctification does not imply the impossibility of future sin. "Entire and permanent sanctification does imply the fact," wrote Finney, "that the sanctified soul will not sin. But the only reason why he will not, is to be ascribed entirely to the sovereign grace of God."[39] Since sanctification does not imply any change in the nature of the subject, but only a change of the selfish will to benevolence, it is not possible to suppose that there is any man who would not fall into sin but for the supporting grace of God.[40] In spite of these statements which point to the theonomous character of the Holy Community, the greatest weight of his interpretation fell upon the autonomous nature of perfection, a conditional demand of the law of God contingent upon natural justice and human ability.

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[36] Ibid., pp. 9-10, 11.

[37] Ibid., p. 11. (The italics are mine.)

[38] Ibid., p. 13.

Although obedience to the law of God was conditioned, in Finney's view, by natural ability and actual knowledge, it was not to be implied that the state of entire sanctification meant that one would at all times be certain that his feelings and conduct were perfectly right. "Cases may occur in which he may be in doubt in regard to the rule of duty," remarked Finney; "and be at loss, without examination, reflection, and prayer, to know whether in a particular case he has done and felt exactly right."[41] Since love is the sum of all that is implied in entire sanctification, a love of the heart, or will, not a mere emotion, one might contemplate his state of love toward God and man to determine if it was marked by supreme and disinterested benevolence. If the will was not disinterested, it would be selfish, not benevolent. And anything less than a supreme love to God implies an idolatrous state of mind. "If any thing else is loved more than God," said Finney, "that is our God."[42]

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[39] Ibid., p. 31.

[40] Ibid.

Finney argued, finally, that entire and permanent sanctification was attainable in this life. The peculiar contours of his argument show it to be fundamentally an autonomous scheme. In the first place, he argued that it was self-evident that entire obedience to God's law was possible "on the ground of natural ability." "To deny this, is to deny that a man is able to do as well as he can." Finney believed that it was plain "that all the law demands, is the exercise of whatever strength we have, in the service of God." The force of finality which he attributes to this first argument is striking: "Now, as entire sanctification consists in perfect obedience to the law of God, and as the law requires nothing more than the right use of whatever strength we have, it is of course forever settled that a state of entire and permanent sanctification is attainable in this life on the ground of natural ability."[43]

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[41] Ibid., pp. 34-35.

[42] Ibid., p. 59.

His second important argument was based on the assurance of the Biblical promises. "When a promise is due," he wrote, "we may expect the fulfillment of it at once or gradually, according to the nature of the blessing."[44] For instance, the promise that the world shall be converted in the latter day does not imply an expectation that it shall be converted "at any one moment of time"; but, "that the Lord will commence it at once, and hasten it in its time, according to the faith and efforts of the Church."[45] He distinguished between promises of grace and promises of glory. The latter are not to be fulfilled "until we arrive at heaven"; but the former are to be understood as "applicable to this life."[46] Finally, he distinguished between unconditional and conditional promises. In a statement which seems to differentiate between an eschatological fulfillment and an actual, present fulfillment--although it is not clear--he wrote: "promises made to the Church as a body may be absolute and their fulfillment be secured and certain, sooner or later, while their fulfillment to any generation of the Church, or to any particular individuals of the Church, may be and must be conditioned upon their faith and the appropriate use of means."[47]

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[43] Ibid., p. 59.

[44] Ibid., p. 70.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Ibid.

A third argument with respect to the attainability of entire sanctification involved the ministry. He believed that ministers were bound to set up standards to which they demanded conformity. He argued that to set up any other standard but entire obedience to the law of God was "to turn Pope and grant an indulgence to sin." Further, to set up this standard and not inculcate that it is attainable, is the same evil as insisting upon repentance in theory, but avowing that it was not attainable in practice. "It is sometimes said," wrote Finney, "that with us entire sanctification is a hobby. But I would humbly ask what else can we preach? Is not every minister bound to insist in every sermon that men shall wholly obey God? And because they will not compromise with any degree or form of sin, are they to be reproached for making the subject of entire obedience a hobby? I ask, by what authority can a minister preach any thing less?"[48]

The Church must be a holy community, entirely consecrated to God, the members of which live under the demand of God to seek and to attain perfection. Finney had come to see no other possible meaning in the associative covenant of the Christian with the Church, as the following passage demonstrates.

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[47] Ibid., pp. 70-71.

[48] Ibid., pp. 90-91.

> If this doctrine is not true, how profane and blasphemous is the covenant of every church of every evangelical denomination. Every church requires its members to make a solemn covenant with God and with the church, in the presence of God and angels, and with their hands upon the emblems of the broken body and shed blood of the blessed Jesus, "to abstain from all ungodliness and every worldly lust, to live soberly and righteously in this present world." Now if the doctrine of the attainability of entire sanctification in this life is not true, what profane mockery is this covenant! It is a covenant to live in a state of entire sanctification, made under the most solemn circumstances, enforced by the most awful sanctions, and insisted upon by the minister of God standing at the altar. Now what right has any minister on earth to require less than this?[49]

Having demonstrated the demand for, and the possibility of, attaining perfection in the obedience of God's law, Finney made his practical application. It was here that the peculiar nature of Oberlin Perfectionism received its theological formulation. Finney argued that temperance in all things implies "correct dietetic and other habits in respect to exercise and rest." As once he sought for the "laws of the mind" in order to apply them for the conversion of sinners, now he sought the "physiological laws of the constitution" so as to promote in the highest degree its physical perfection. Thus he aimed to preserve the body in such a state of perfection as would be, in the highest degree possible, capable of being

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49. Ibid., p. 92.

used by the soul to fulfill all the will of God.[50] He discussed the proposal that there may be occasions when the body and its strength must be sacrificed to the interests of the soul, and of the Redeemer's kingdom, and concluded that there could be cases "in which the violation of physical law may be justifiable and even a duty, where the kingdom of Christ demands the sacrifice."[51] However, where the circumstances do not clearly demand it, sanctification of the body implies:

> that its strength shall not be exhausted, nor any of its powers debilitated or injured by any neglect of exercise, or by any over-working of its organs, or by any violation of its laws whatever. It implies the utmost regularity in all our habits of eating, drinking, sleeping, labor, rest, exercise, and in short a strictly religious regard to all those things that can contribute to our highest perfection of body and soul.[52]

This view supported a brief, but controversial period of dietary reforms superimposed upon the already vigorous application of temperance ideals.

The sanctification of the Church, that it might be a perfectly holy community, was at the very center of Finney's thought in the Oberlin period. The emphasis upon the doctrines of disinterested benevolence and entire sanctification for the perfection of the holy community was continued to the end of his life. To these doctrines was added an innovation which further opened the Oberlin theology to radical interpretation.

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[50] Ibid., p. 188.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Ibid., p. 189.

In 1841, William Cochran read a paper on "The Simplicity of Moral Action" which discussed the impossibility of a divided heart in moral action, affirming that the sinner, in his sin, is wholly destitute of righteousness, and the Christian, in his obedience, is wholly conformed to God's will.[53] This paper was the sign of ferment which was taken up into the formulation of Finney's theology. In his Lectures on Systematic Theology (1846) he discussed the proposition, "Moral Character is always wholly right or wholly wrong, and never partly right and partly wrong at the same time."[54] He argued that moral character belongs solely to the "ultimate intention of the mind"; and that the law of God requires "supreme disinterested benevolence." Then, he equated benevolence, or good-willing, with good-intending, or intending good. Therefore, he concluded that holiness, or virtue, "consists in the supreme ultimate intention, choice, or willing of the highest well-being of God and the highest good of his kingdom."[55]

Just as holiness consists in the ultimate intention, so does sin. Sin consists in willing, with a supreme intention, self-interest, as opposed to the highest well-being of God and the good of the universe. From this point in his argument, Finney cut through all complexity in moral choice; for both sin and holiness consist precisely in the singleness, or simplicity, of intention. Therefore, it is inadmissible to suppose that any choice, or intention, may have a complex character; as if an intention might be both holy (a supreme disinterested choice) and sinful (a supreme self-interested choice) at one and the same time.[56] Turning to the Bible, Finney argued that the simplicity of moral action was expressly what Jesus taught his disciples when he informed them that they could not serve God and Mammon. "Now by this," remarked Finney, "He did not mean, that a man could not serve God at one time and Mammon at another; but that he could not serve both at the same time."[57] Further, he stated, "The common philosophy, that maintains the coexistence of both sin and holiness in the mind at the same time, is virtually Antinomianism. It is a rejection of the law of God as the standard of duty."[58] "The very idea of sin and holiness co-existing in the same mind," he remarked, "is an absurd philosophy, contrary to scripture and common sense."[59] Finally, he argued that the theory of the "mixed character of moral actions" is dangerous because it leads to the fatal error "that while we are conscious of present sin we are or can be in a state acceptable to God."[60] Finney reached the conclusion that "holiness is holiness, and it is really nonsense to speak of a holiness that consists with sin."[61]

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[53] Brief discussions of "The Simplicity of Moral Action" may be found in Frank G. Beardsley, A Mighty Winner of Souls, Charles G. Finney; A Study in Evangelism (New York: American Tract Society, 1937), pp. 141ff., and George F. Wright, op. cit., pp. 221ff.

[54] Finney, Lectures on Systematic Theology (1846), pp. 156ff.

[55] Ibid., p. 157.

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[56] Ibid., p. 159.

[57] Ibid., p. 171.

[58] Ibid., pp. 171-172.

[59] Ibid., p. 172.

The homiletical tool forged from this doctrine of the simplicity of moral action was the term, "seared conscience." When the conscience becomes "seared," it no longer is sensitive to the demands of holiness. In 1841, when this discussion was begun, Finney spoke much about the seared conscience and its results in very concrete situations. In a sermon reported in the Oberlin Evangelist, he said that our consciences are seared,

> when questions that concern our own well-being, or the well-being of others, are not regarded and treated as moral questions. For example, when the abolition of slavery, temperance, moral reform, politics, business principles, physiological and dietetic reform,--when these, I say, are not treated as moral questions, and as imposing moral obligation, the conscience must be in a seared state.[62]

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[60] Ibid., p. 173.

[61] Ibid. Finney's triumphant conclusion has a certain "logical" consistency to it, if you grant his first principles and data; but it seems to lack the Biblical and experiential reality of, for instance, Luther's "simul justus et peccator." Wright shows that Finney's view is very similar to that of the Hopkinsian, Nathaniel Emmons (op. cit., pp. 221-225).

[62] The Oberlin Evangelist, III, No. 9, (April 28, 1841), 65.

Again, he said:

> When you can trifle with your health; go out in the snow or wet with thin shoes and hose, or in any way inappropriately clothed, unless you are under the necessity of doing so,--your conscience must be seared as with a hot iron. When you can neglect to ventilate your room, see that you have not too little or too much fire,--in short, when you can in any way trifle with your health, that precious gift of God, without conviction of guilt,--your conscience is alarmingly seared.[63]

This whole-hearted concern that the totality of life might be brought under submission to the rule of Christ resulted in a tremendous impulse for reform and holiness in the Oberlin community. Unfortunately, such a radical principle was bound to be abused by those who did not have the intellectual and temperamental balance of Finney. Even those who had supported the new measures of Finney, and rejoiced in his revivals, entered the lists against him in the controversy over Oberlin Perfectionism, which erupted in 1841. Finney continued, however, to preach the idea of the Church as a holy community. In 1873, just two years before his death, he preached a sermon on the "Ideal Church." The outline of this sermon, in his still firm script, shows that he proclaimed that the "Ideal Church" was "composed of individuals"; that it was "a glorious Church"; that it was "morally perfect." The Church was glorious "because the individuals are glorious";

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[63] *Ibid.*

it was perfect, "because the individuals are so."[64]

B. The Threat of Ultraism

1. Physiological and Spiritual Reforms

Whitney R. Cross has written about the "Genesis of Ultraism" during the years 1826-1837, in the "burned-over district" of western New York.[65] He indicated that the protracted meetings and new measures, instigated by Finney, were widely utilized after 1830, and increasingly became the province of the itinerant evangelist. These post-Finney evangelists were numerous, and of assorted temperaments, but they tended to fall into a pattern. They used the same measures and labored under similar conditions. For the most part they lacked formal education, and certainly were neither intellectuals nor original thinkers. "They had less in common with orthodox clerics," wrote Cross, "than with the laymen who so often imposed them upon an established ministry."[66] There were a host of such men whose insignificance, poverty, and shifting careers, as Cross pointed out, practically defy analysis. These were the men who created and personified ultraism.[67] "The special labors of a Finney in sanctification," remarked Cross, "a Weld in abolition, or a Miller in premillennialism cannot adequately be appreciated without realizing the dependence of all three upon each other, and more emphatically upon the veritable host of evangelists who swarmed over Yankeedom, old and new, preaching every shade of gospel, heresy, and reform to a people who for a generation had been saturated with spiritual and moral intensity."[68]

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[64] Finney, "Ideal Church," a sermon outline, no. 530 (1873), Finney Papers, OCL. Cf. also, "A Good Profession," no. 463 (1870); "Entire Sanctification," no. 355 (1868); and, "The Way to be Sanctified," no. 349 (1868), Finney Papers, OCL.

[65] Whitney R. Cross, The Burned-Over District; The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1950), Book IV, pp. 173-210.

[66] Ibid., p. 186.

It would seem to be the case that the threat of barbarism, to which attention has been called in another chapter, elicited an impulse for moral and spiritual reform that, under the form of enthusiastic, revivalistic religion, soon became the threat of ultraism. Cross has shown that eccentricity and radicalism were broadly and deeply planted by those itinerant evangelists who personified the spirit of ultraism. There were Jedediah Burchard, James Boyle, Luther Myrick, Augustus Littlejohn, and Horatio Foote, along with the now familiar figures of Finney's "holy band."[69] Cross concluded that ultraism with its heated revivalism, millennialism, and perfectionism was indeed a remarkable phenomenon. "It came very close, in fact," he wrote, "to being an impossible state of mind. Its existence could be only momentary, for its nature prohibited concerted and prolonged agreement by any considerable group of persons. It could be achieved only at the exact climax of religious zeal, before inherent discords loosed the fervor it contained into a multitude of various channels."[70]

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[67] Ibid., p. 187.

[68] Ibid., pp. 187-188.

[69] Cf. Ibid., pp. 188-197.

When Finney went to Oberlin, he was embraced by a community whose ethos was fundamentally that of the stream of immigrants through western New York into the Western Reserve of Ohio. It was thirsting for that "climax of religious zeal" which all were prepared to experience at his bidding. Colonists and students alike drank deeply from the springs of "entire sanctification," which Finney and Mahan, along with younger colleagues, opened before them. Soon the colony was reeling in its intoxication with Christian perfectionism, and the spirit of ultraism was once again let loose upon the Church. But what is ultraism? William B. Sprague, pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church in Albany, New York, in a widely read sermon, entitled "Religious Ultraism," gives us a contemporary view in 1835.[71]

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[70] Ibid., p. 208.

He remarked that his hearers must have been struck with the fact that, "in many of our religious and benevolent operations,--to say nothing of our political movements,--there has been an increasing tendency to wild and extravagant action."[72] He suggested that there was a large class of over-zealous people who seemed to regret that such words as "caution," "prudence," and "discretion" had ever found their way into the Christian's vocabulary. In this context he defined his term:

> The spirit to which I refer, is not confined to any particular department of religious action: if it were, it would be an occasion for much less alarm;--but you have to encounter it, like an all pervading energy, in almost every good enterprize (sic) of the day; and it has gathered so much strength, that he who thinks to oppose it, may well gird himself for conflict with a giant. I scarcely know by what single word to designate this evil: I will call it Ultraism; which, if not a strictly authorized word, is so much in popular use, that the idea which I wish to convey by it will instantly occur to you.[73]

Sprague argued that the Church was in imminent danger from the progress of ultraism, and attempted to analyze its sources, elements, and tendencies.

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[71] William B. Sprague, D.D., Religious Ultraism, A Sermon delivered August 25, 1835, at the installation of the Rev. John H. Hunter, as pastor of the First Congregational Church in West Springfield, Mass. (Albany: Packard & Van Bethuysen, 1835).

[72] Ibid., p. 7.

[73] Ibid.

Among the sources of ultraism, Sprague found an "ardent temperament" and "mistaken views of religion" to be prominent. He believed that even "eminently pious men" have sometimes permitted their "constitutional ardor" to triumph over the dictates of sober judgment.[74] It cannot be doubted that the idea of the Church as a universal reform association, and the perfectionist view of the Church as a holy community had magnetic qualities to draw men of ardent religious zeal. And the first mistaken view of religion, to which Sprague pointed, may be clearly found in Finney's thought, as has been shown.

> The first is, *ascribing an unscriptural and disproportionate importance to human agency*. That *man* has a part, and a highly important part, to perform, in the accomplishment of God's purpose in the moral renovation of the world, no one can reasonably question; for this is a work which God has emphatically committed into the hands of the church; and he has required them to prosecute it vigorously and perseveringly, until it be accomplished. But he does not require, he does not even permit, them to attempt the work in their own strength; he recognizes in them nothing better than feeble instruments, which operate effectually only as they are sustained, and guided, and quickened, by the influence of his Spirit. But there are those whose religious speculations would seem to take God's work out of his own hands; to make man a mighty agent rather than a humble instrument; to deny to God the power as a preparation for denying to him the glory.[75]

The other error to which he referred was the notion that "all religion consists in excitement, or in action."[76] Other sources of religious ultraism were thought to be a "restless desire of change," "the love of distinction," and the "force of external circumstances," especially the power of public opinion.[77]

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[74] *Ibid*., p. 11.

[75] *Ibid*., pp. 11-12.

Again, although this sermon was published before the flood tide of Oberlin Perfectionism, it is interesting to note how applicable are Sprague's discussion of the elements of ultraism to the Oberlin situation. First there was "self-righteousness." "One class of Ultraists deliberately claim," said Sprague, "not only to be righteous, but perfectly righteous; and instead of coming before God to make confession of their sins, they come to remind him that they are as holy as the angels. Another class attempt to promote Revivals of Religion by unwarrantable and unscriptural means; and then in the spirit of triumph, appeal to the result of their labors to justify their extravagance."[78] Another element was "censoriousness," followed by "disingenuousness," of which he said: "I have already adverted to the fact that it is a popular, if not a fundamental, maxim with Ultraists, that the end justifies the means; and it is scarcely supposable that this principle should go into operation, without involving more or less of dissimulation and artifice."[79]

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[76] Ibid., p. 12.

[77] Ibid., pp. 12-16.

[78] Ibid., p. 17.

"Inconsistency" was another essential element of ultraism. "They profess in most cases a higher degree of spirituality than others," asserted Sprague; "and yet you are not unfrequently shocked by their irreverence, not to say their impiety. They profess to have their hearts full of christian benevolence; and yet out of that good treasure proceed coarse and offensive allusions,--violent attacks on character,--as if they would kill the body to save the soul."[80] But most of all, Sprague warned of the threat of "fanaticism." Here, in a passage reminiscent of his Lectures on Revivals of Religion (1833), he excoriated ultraism:

> We have had fanatical doctrines and fanatical practices; fanatical ends proposed, and fanatical means employed for their accomplishment. We have had fanaticism in the pulpit, ... We have had fanaticism on the platform, ... in our public assemblies;--confusion taking the place of order, and all reverence, and dignity and decorum, falling before the wild uproar of a hundred tongues. We have had fanaticism in connexion with some of our benevolent institutions, performing startling feats of apparent self-denial, and affronting the common sense of the community by its arrogant dictates. We have had fanaticism in our Revivals, maintaining that it is as easy to be converted as to move the hand; virtually identifying conversion with a mere physical act, and at the close of a meeting proclaiming the number who have been converted within the hour, with as much

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[79] Ibid., p. 19.

[80] Ibid., p. 21.

> confidence as if, in each case, the genuineness of the change were certified to them under the signature of Omniscience. And we have had fanaticism superabounding, overflowing, in some of our religious periodicals; and through this medium especially, the flame has been kindled almost every where; and so powerful has been the influence, that men who have sat down to the reading of a newspaper sober, have risen up fanatics.[81]

Among the tendencies of ultraism, Sprague noted that it was well-adapted to "throw open the floodgates of error." He commented upon the recent history of the American Church; how times of wild excitement were the devil's best time for sowing the seeds of error. "For instance," he remarked, "there is a heresy recently sprung up among us which is known by the name of Perfectionism, and which is as absurd and unscriptural in its principles, as it is licentious in its tendencies. But this originated in the very hot-bed of fanaticism, amidst scenes of frightful extravagance, in which the dictates of sober judgment were silenced, and the passions turned the man whithersoever they listed."[82] Another tendency of ultraism was "to drive many into the opposite extreme of inactivity and formality." It was this tendency that led the growing denominations to react strenuously against revivalism and perfectionism, and hence overlook the gospel demands with respect to evangelism and sanctification. This same reaction was shared by those outside the Church who looked with disfavor upon the prevailing abuses. Therefore Sprague rightly believed that ultraism was designed to "supply to the careless world an apology for the neglect of Religion."[83] In consideration of all of this, he concluded by calling the ministry of the Church to their overwhelming responsibilities in a new, and changing age. In other days the Church had more internal quietude, and the ministry was "proportionally free from vexatious embarrassments"; but now, as a result of ultraism--

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[81] Ibid., pp. 22-23.

[82] Ibid., p. 27. Certain cults of perfectionism reached their high point of popularity in New York during 1834. Sexual promiscuity led to their downfall, but they served to warn Finney of the danger of this form of antinomian perfectionism. John Humphrey Noyes took another lesson from them (Cf. Cross, op. cit., pp. 241-242). It is apparent that Sprague was referring to these cults when he spoke of licentiousness; this was not a manifestation of Oberlin Perfectionism.

> But now every thing both in the Church and world seems to be in motion; the elements of social order, of civil society, are disturbed; and ten thousand tongues and hands are busy in an effort to break up the foundations of many generations. The movements of the Church itself, or at least of many portions of it, are wild and eccentric; resembling more the momentary blaze of the meteor accompanied by a terrific explosion, than the calm and gradual progress of the shining light.[84]

The time is well spent in contemplating what Sprague had to say about religious ultraism, because it suggests to us the reaction of the thirties to perfectionism. Oberlin was not "wild" but it was "eccentric," and the churches of the more traditional type were not prepared to suffer any more ultraism fanned by the theological breezes out of Oberlin during the forties. Presbyteries of the Western Reserve, and of western New York, responded to the threat of Oberlin Perfectionism almost immediately, as did Finney's usual critics. Oberlin reacted to this criticism with attempts to justify its position as one of reform, and not ultraism. For instance, an address entitled "Ultraism and Reform" was given at the commencement program in 1841, in which the speaker attempted to differentiate the two positions. Of ultraism, the speaker said: "The term has no settled signification, but it certainly may, and often does mean, going beyond and departing from the truth or from the true principles of reform."[85] Oberlin was assured that if a person adopted the "principles of eternal truth," and rightly applied those principles to the subject of reform, he could not be an ultraist.[86] It was not a characteristic of Finneyites to doubt that they were not rightly using the "principles of eternal truth"; nor had they learned from their mentor to fear a bold enthusiasm. For instance, concerning the matter of "prevailing prayer," or the "prayer of faith," Finney had said, "Oh, that there might be such a spirit in this city and in this Church! I know it would make a noise if we had such things done here. But I would not care for that. Let them say, if they please, that the folks in Chatham Chapel are getting deranged. We need not be afraid of that, if we live near enough to God to enjoy His Spirit in the manner I have described."[87] Again, concerning the doctrine of the prayer of faith, he said, "I will refer to some objections, which are brought forward, against this doctrine. 'It leads to fanaticism, and amounts to a new revelation.' Why should this be a stumbling block?"[88]

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[83] *Ibid.*, p. 35.

[84] *Ibid.*, p. 43.

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[85] William B. Brown, "Ultraism and Reform," Spoken at the Annual Commencement of the Oberlin Collegiate Institute, August, 1841, The Oberlin Evangelist, IV, No. 2 (January 19, 1842), 12.

[86] Ibid.

Such statements as these, and the enthusiasm which they engendered, were hardly designed to give comfort to anxious observers of the Oberlin scene. The peculiar certitude that Oberlin Perfectionism had, with its support deep in the ground of natural ability and the simplicity of moral action, went hand-in-glove with this enthusiasm to grapple with matters of diet and dress, as well as every other imaginable moral and spiritual reform. The whole pattern tended toward the simplicity that has everywhere marked attempts to restore (restitutio) the life and practice of primitive Christianity.[89] "After all, brother Weld," wrote Lewis Tappan, "reformation must begin at home. Every man and woman must live as near primitive Xianity (sic) as they can. Then all these queries will be solved. If we are holy we shall know what sin is--if we are free from sin we shall be holy."[90] Ultraism was a cult of enthusiasm and simplicity,[91] yet, although Finney encouraged these characteristics in others, he was not himself carried away by them to the same extremes. Indeed, Oberlin Perfectionism presents a picture very similar to that painted by Ronald A. Knox of John Wesley and early Methodism. He wrote:

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[87] Finney, Lectures on Revivals of Religion (edition cited), p. 67.

[88] *Ibid.*, p. 85.

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[89] The reference here is meant to suggest that the Oberlin pattern of reform was more akin to the restitutio of the left wing sects of the Reformation, than to the reformatio of the Magisterial Reformation.

[90] Lewis Tappan to Theodore Weld, March 8, 1844, Lewis Tappan Papers, Library of Congress.

[91] Ronald A. Knox struck a familiar note in his study of Enthusiasm when he wrote, "Enthusiasm is a disease, not of the starved, but of the full-fed organism, and takes on its character from the nature of the protest it desires to register. Because the age, compared with those which had gone before it, seemed an artificial one, the medieval heretics struck, everywhere, the note of simplicity." -- Enthusiasm. A Chapter in the History of Religion With Special Reference to the XVII and XVIII Centuries (London: Oxford Press, 1950), p. 105.

Also, in his concluding remarks, he wrote, "All through the writing of this book I have been haunted by a long-remembered echo of La Princesse lointaine:

Frere Trophime. L'inertie est le seul vice, Maître Érasme; Et la seule vertu est . . .

Erasme. Quoi?

Frere Trophime. L'enthousiasme!

--Ibid., 591.

> And indeed that is the disconcerting fact about early Methodism--that its founder sympathized with enthusiasm . . . in its most violent forms, yet was never himself carried away by it. The two brothers, almost alone among the supporters of the movement, kept their heads. Whole audiences might cry aloud--it is Wesley's own phrase--as if men were being put to the sword; the preacher stood there taking notes, ready to publish an account in his Journal. Not that he was for a moment insincere; he was an experimentalist, prodigiously interested in the phenomena of conversion.[92]

If the Church was to be a holy community, and the millennium realized in the United States, individual wills must be wholly obedient to the law of God. This meant enthusiastic action in every field of moral and spiritual reform, including "physiological reform." That the body, as well as the mind and soul, must be fit to obey God is a principle of Oberlin Perfectionism already alluded to. Here the peculiar type of ultraism which it engendered is discussed. As early as 1834 and 1835 Finney was keen on asserting the harmful nature of tea, coffee, and tobacco. Very early in his preaching he adopted abstention from all alcoholic beverages as an adjunct requirement for justification. Frequently he joined such physiological reform to the cause of self-denial with a view to supporting the mission of the Church to the heathen. "Measure your desire for their salvation," he exclaimed, "by the self-denial you practise, in giving of your substance to send them the Gospel. Do you deny yourself even the hurtful superfluities of life, such as tea, coffee, and tobacco?"[93] Again he pronounced the dreadful waste: "An estimate has recently been made, showing that in the United States seven millions of dollars' worth of coffee is consumed yearly; and who does not know, that a great part of this is consumed by the Church. And yet grave ministers and members of Christian Churches are not ashamed to be seen countenancing this enormous waste of money; while at the same time the poor heathens are sending upon every wind of heaven their agonising wail for help."[94]

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[92] *Ibid.*, pp. 451-452.

But, for Finney, physiological reform was not merely a matter of conserving money for missions, it was a matter of being "temperate in all things," and then, in the Oberlin period, a demand of personal holiness. "There is a vast deal of intemperate drinking, in particular, but intemperance in eating, and in living generally." He continued: "There are some ministers, and many professors, who will drink down wine that has as much spirit in it as brandy and water. This is intemperance. Chewing and smoking tobacco are mere acts of intemperance." As a matter of fact, Finney believed that until Christians get a conscience on this subject, "they will make but little progress in religion."[95] He came down equally hard on the subject of drinking tea and coffee. The following passage is of special interest because it was deleted from the English edition of 1840:

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[93] Finney, Lectures on Revivals of Religion (edition cited), p. 43.

[94] Ibid., pp. 417-418.

> It is well known, or ought to be, that TEA AND COFFEE have no nutriment in them. They are mere stimulants. They go through the system without being digested. The milk and sugar you put in them are nourishing. And so they would be just as much so, if you mixed them with rum, and made milk punch. But the tea and the coffee afford no nourishment. And yet I dare say, that a majority of the families in this city give more in a year for their tea and coffee, than they do to save the world from hell. Probably this is true respecting entire churches. Even agents of benevolent societies will dare to go through the churches soliciting funds, for the support of missionary and other institutions, and yet use tea, coffee, and in some cases tobacco. Strange! There is now in this city, an agent employed in soliciting funds, who uses all three of these worse than useless stimulants. And he is, moreover, a minister of the gospel![96]

The historian of Oberlin College has given the background of the physiological reform movement on both the British and

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95. Ibid., p. 416.

96. Ibid., pp. 416-417. The English edition was published in London by Simkin, Marshall, and Co., in 1840.

the American side.[97] The details of the external movement need not be repeated here, but it is noted that Oberlin was in the van of the health crusade stimulated by the work of the Drs. Sylvester Graham and William A. Alcott. Graham became the General Agent for the Pennsylvania Temperance Society in 1830 and immediately began to lecture on the dangers of intemperance of all kinds. Books and journals on the "Graham diet" soon became a fad. Shipherd, Stewart, Mahan, and Finney were all Grahamites; and in 1834 it was provided by the rules of the Collegiate Institute that the board should be "of a plain & holesome (sic) kind." The colonists had previously agreed in their Covenant of 1832 and 1833 to eat "only plain & wholesome food," renounce tobacco, and "all strong & unnecessary drinks, even tea & coffee as far as practicable."[98] The eating of meat was frowned upon, and students could secure a meat diet only by paying extra for it and sitting at a special table. But during 1840, even this practice was discontinued for a time.[99] Butter was a questionable article in the Graham diet, as were pastries, candies and all highly flavored foods. Honey and maple sugar were preferred to refined sugar cane because they were in a more natural state.[100] Fletcher reports that when Professor John P. Cowles, an unmarried teacher who took his meals at the hall, brought a pepper shaker to the table it was ordered removed by the trustees. Cowles thought that his subsequent dismissal was not unrelated to this offense; for it was believed not only that such spices were irritating to the lining of the stomach, but that they were licentious, unduly stimulating to the passions![101] Cereals, fruits and vegetables were the basic elements in the Oberlin diet, and these were to be consumed only in temperate amounts. A boarding house account in the Oberlin College archives indicates that a certain coed was granted a special thirty cent rebate on her board bill "for abstemiousness."[102]

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[97] Robert S. Fletcher, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 316ff.

[98] *Ibid.*, p. 319.

[99] Robert S. Fletcher, "Bread and Doctrine at Oberlin," *Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Quarterly*, XLIX (January-March, 1940), 62.

Instances of student zeal in regard to this physiological reform are recorded, but there was rabid opposition as well. Professor John P. Cowles insisted that the physiological reform at Oberlin went "beyant all the beyants (sic) entirely," and even suggested that the system had been responsible for the death of some of the lady students. "But you," he accused the trustees, "have simplified simplicity, and reformed reformation, till not only the health and lives of many are in danger; but some I fear, have already been physiologically reformed into eternity."[103] A malicious and humorous poem about Oberlin appeared in Delazon Smith's A History of Oberlin; or, New Lights of the West, which closed with a judgment which expressed the thoughts of many:

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[100] Ibid., p. 63.

[101] Cf. Ibid.

[102] Ibid., p. 64.

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[103] Ibid., p. 65. A summary of Graham's teachings which were adopted by the Oberlin trustees included the following guide-lines: "(1) Clothing should be adequate but not too warm and never tight. (2) All ought to sleep about seven hours a day, preferably from 10 p.m. to 5 a.m., but never after meals. Feather beds were considered highly injurious and 'comfortables' objectionable. Sleeping apartments should be ventilated. (3) Bathing in warm or cold water was highly recommended--even in winter! As to diet: (4) Wine, cider, beer, tobacco, tea, coffee, and all other stimulants were prohibited to all Grahamites. Soft water alone was to be drunk at meals. (5) 'The chief food should be vegetables and fruit, to be eaten in as near their natural state as possible.' Meat and fish were discountenanced. (6) Bread of unbolted wheat was recommended as the chief element in the diet. Rye, Indian corn, rice, sago, and tapioca were also recommended 'if plainly cooked.' (7) 'Fats or gravies of any kind' were prohibited. Good cream was recommended as a substitute for butter or 'Graham butter' made of milk and flour might be used. (8) No pastries or sweets other than honey and maple syrup were allowed. Pies made of unbolted wheat or cornmeal were excepted. (9) No condiments such as pepper, mustard, oil, vinegar, etc. were to be used. (10) None should overeat and all must eat slowly and masticate their food thoroughly. And finally (11) The taking of medicine was frowned upon, abstinence from food being recommended as a curative, and (12) Regular exercise in the open air was insisted upon as essential to health." -- Robert S. Fletcher, op. cit., I, pp. 321-322.

But dread you not, some famished foe may rise,
With vengeful arm, and beat you to a jelly?
Ye robbers of our vitals' best supplies,
Beware! "There is no joking with the belly."
Nor hope the world will in your footsteps follow,
Your bread and doctrine are too hard to swallow.[104]

Oberlin rejected the Graham diet in 1845, and Finney made public acknowledgment of his "bondage" on this subject. In a letter published in the Oberlin Evangelist he confessed:

> My observation has shown me that persons are liable to be brought into bondage in different directions upon the subject of diet, and dress and many other things of this kind. When I first read Graham's work on Physiology and Dietetics, I was deeply interested in it, and as it was at the time the best light as I supposed which I had, I became very scrupulous in my conformity to his views. After a while, I found myself in complete bondage to what is called Grahamism.
>
> Some are manifestly in bondage to their appetite and have no command over themselves. Others are in bondage to Grahamism or to some other ism, so as to be ready to starve themselves well nigh to death, unless they can get a particular kind of diet. Now all this appears to me to be taking upon our necks a yoke which God has never imposed upon us. If I understand the rule with respect to diet it is that we shall as far as circumstances admit, prefer those things which are most consistent with and conducive to the best physical state of our bodies, not hesitating, however, for conscience sake to eat such things as are set before us in our journeyings and wanderings, providing they are not positively injurious.[105]

Thus ended a decade of dietary reform under the auspices of

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[104] Delazon Smith, A History of Oberlin; or, New Lights of the West (Cleveland, Ohio: S. Underhill & Son, 1837).

[105] "Letter from Prof. Finney to Miss A. E. of Vermont . . . . No. 4," The Oberlin Evangelist, VII, No. 9 (April, 1845), 68.

Oberlin Perfectionism.

In his New York lectures of 1835 Finney was enunciating the reform of dress that should become the pattern for the holy community. He was especially concerned that women should not let "style" interfere with their conversion and Christian witness.

> Are you going to walk in the street? Take care how you dress. What is that on your head? What does that gaudy ribbon, and those ornaments upon your dress, say to every one that meets you? It makes the impression that you wish to be thought pretty. Take care! You might just as well write on your clothes, "NO TRUTH IN RELIGION." It says, "GIVE ME DRESS, GIVE ME FASHION, GIVE ME FLATTERY, AND I AM HAPPY."[106]

He proposed that revivals were absolutely hindered when Christians bowed down at the shrine of fashion.

> It is easy to see why revivals do not prevail in a great city. How can they? Just look at God's witnesses, and see what they are testifying to. They seem to be agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord, and lie to the Holy Ghost.--They make their vows to God, to consecrate themselves wholly to him, and then go bowing down at the shrine of fashion, and then wonder there are no revivals. It would be more than a miracle to have a revival under such circumstances.[107]

Furthermore, such vanity was an instance of pride that must be put down.

> How many times have you detected yourself in consulting vanity, about your dress and appearance?

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106. Finney, Lectures on Revivals of Religion (edition cited), p. 153.

107. Ibid., p. 154.

> How many times have you thought more, and taken more pains, and spent more time, about decorating your body to go to church, than you have about preparing your mind for the worship of God? You have gone to the house of God caring more how you appear outwardly in the sight of mortal men, than how your soul appears in the sight of the heart-searching God. You have in fact set up yourself to be worshipped by them, rather than prepared to worship God yourself. You came to divide the worship of God's house, to draw off the attention of God's people to look at your pretty appearance. It is in vain to pretend now, that you don't care any thing about having people look at you. Be honest about it. Would you take all this pains about your looks if every body was blind?[108]

Like the case of dietetic reform, the ultraism regarding the subject of dress passed its fever mark in 1845. The same rule of universal benevolence was to be applied; but, as may be seen in another letter to a correspondent from Vermont, the radical application was subdued. Finney asserted, "That the rule is that of universal and perfect benevolence," but in cases of dress where options seem to be equal, personal choice should prevail.[109] Further, he said, "That what is upon the whole benevolent in every case must be decided by sober, honest, and earnest consideration of all the circumstances of the case. Every thing is of course to be avoided that will appear to be a conformity to the world, because we are required to avoid all appearance of evil."[110] In all cases the price of adornment was to be determined in the light of benevolence, and one was not to dress so as to call attention to oneself. These principles left plenty of room for discussion upon the subject; many continued extreme interpretations, but the main line of Oberlin Perfectionism turned from dietetic and dress reforms to the more pressing issues of temperance, antislavery, and peace movements.

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[108] Ibid., p. 45. Note that it seems to be a pattern of Finney's rhetoric of enthusiasm to ride a legitimate point into the ground.

[109] "Letter from Prof. Finney to Miss A. E. of Vermont," The Oberlin Evangelist, VII, No. 7 (March 26, 1845), 52.

The whole subject of spiritual reform remained dear to the heart of Finney, however; and to the end of his life he took extreme positions with regard to business practices, the reading of literature, and other amusements. Spiritual reform, if holiness is to be achieved, must be thorough-going; hence, he encouraged Christians to inquire earnestly into the lives of young converts. "Have you earnestly and affectionately inquired into the detail of their lives, into their business operations, and after their books and associates?" he asked. And since the Christian must live an exemplary life of holiness, he further challenged: "Have you exhibited that deadness to the world, its riches, honors, amusements, friendships, and opinions, which you know they ought to exercise?" Indeed, "Have you carefully copied the example of Christ who says, 'For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.'?"[111] Finney considered most novels to be a waste of time, both in the writing and the reading of them. And he continued the traditional American religious warnings against the theater.[112]

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[110] Ibid.

Thoroughly perplexed by the change in American culture following the Civil War, Finney took up his pen again on the subject of "amusements." A correspondent, respectfully but firmly, attempted to orient him in the new patterns. "It is not in the nature of things that one generation of thinkers and writers should fully understand another," he wrote. "Older ministers look with suspicion upon the ideas and methods of the younger, and neither class does full justice to the other. Your own experience in former days may bring this freshly to mind, as you remember how sure many of the truly godly old ministers were that your doctrines and measures would be the ruin of the churches."[113] Further along in this letter he wrote, "I make no plea for worldliness in heart or life. The Church must be distinct from the world, but not by a Quaker garb or dialect, or by anything involving that principle. The Church must be positively as well as negatively holy; it must do more than withdraw from actual evil; it must learn how to appropriate all true good, and not feebly count it self-indulgence to do so. In no other way will there ever be a Christian civilization, or a full, proportionate, beautiful and attractive individual character."[114] Such a criticism was very much to the point concerning the ultraism in dietetic and spiritual reforms in dress and amusements engendered by Oberlin Perfectionism; but the theological and ecclesiastical critique was even more severe.

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[111] "Prof. Finney's Letters--No. 8," The Oberlin Evangelist, II, No. 3 (January 29, 1840). 17.

[112] The general religious view of the theater at the turn of the century is discussed by John A. Krout and Dixon Ryan Fox, The Completion of Independence, 1790-1830 (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1944), pp. 393-394.

[113] William W. Patton to Finney, June 25, 1871, Finney Papers, OCL.

2. The Response to Oberlin Perfectionism

The doctrine that the entire and permanent sanctification of the Church was attainable, and that this work of perfection must begin and be completed before the Christian may enter heaven, has been presented as the chief emphasis of Finney's Oberlin period. The threat of ultraism, present in this doctrine, brought an immediate response from ecclesiastical bodies. The succinct resolutions of Troy Presbytery are a model of this response.

> 1. Resolved; That in the judgment of this Presbytery, the doctrine of 'Christian Perfection' in this life,

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[114] *Ibid.*

> is not only false, but calculated in its tendencies, to engender self-righteousness, disorder, deception, censoriousness and fanaticism.
>
> 2. Resolved, That it is contrary to the Confession of Faith adopted by the Presbyterian church in the United States. See chap. 12, Sec. 2.
>
> 3. Resolved, That it is the duty of all orthodox ministers to acquaint themselves with this error, and at such times and in such measures as may seem to them most expedient, to instruct the people on this point.
>
> 4. Resolved, That we view with regret and sorrow, the ground taken on this subject by the Theological Professors at Oberlin.
>
> 5. Resolved, That we hail with joy every improvement in human opinion that conforms to the Bible, and promises, in its practical tendency, to decrease the sins or increase the moral purity of the church.
>
> 6. Resolved, That the above statement and resolutions be signed by the Moderator and Stated Clerk, and published in the New York Evangelist, New York Observer, the Christian Observer, and the Presbyterian.
>
> Fayette Shipherd requested that his dissent from the above report of the Committee be appended to it, entered on the records of the Presbytery, and published with it. All the other members present voted in the affirmative.[115]

The resolutions were signed by Thomas J. Haswell, Moderator, and N.S.S. Beman, Stated Clerk, June 29, 1841.

It is understandable that Fayette Shipherd did not sign this document, for he had worked with Finney in the great Rochester Revival of 1831, and it was his brother, John Jay, who established Oberlin. It was, however, a shock to Finney that his old friend, Beman, should so repudiate him. Many of the men of Troy Presbytery had supported Finney's revivals; but they could not support his perfectionism. Finney's response to Troy Presbytery was, like the resolutions above, reported in his Lectures on Systematic Theology. In it appears implicit evidence of widespread disavowal of Oberlin Perfectionism, and touchingly explicit evidence of Finney's pain from the opposition of friends, such as Beman. At the close of the letter, he wrote:

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[115] "Action of the Troy Presbytery" (June 29, 1841), quoted in Finney, Lectures on Systematic Theology (1847), pp. 183-184.

> Will you, dear brethren, permit me to ask how long the opposers of the doctrine of entire sanctification in this life, expect to retain the confidence of the church, and prevent their understanding and believing this doctrine, by such a course of procedure as this? You are no doubt aware that your course is not a novel one, but that it has been substantially pursued by several other opposers of this doctrine.
>
> And now, beloved brethren in the Lord, do not understand me as entering into a war of words with you, or as entertaining the least unkind feeling in my heart towards you. I most cheerfully leave to your deliberate and prayerful consideration, the remarks I have freely made on your report. I cannot however refrain from saying, that when I saw the name of one whom I greatly loved, and with whom I had often taken sweet counsel, attached to that report, my heart felt a kind of spontaneous gushing, and I almost involuntarily exclaimed, '*Et tu, Brute!*'[116]

Another presbytery, the Presbytery of Cleveland, ordered to be published its committee report, "An Exposition of the

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[116] Finney, "To the Troy Presbytery," Lectures on Systematic Theology (1847), p. 195.

Peculiarities, Difficulties and Tendencies of Oberlin Perfectionism," on October 8, 1840. It warned that the former successes of Finney and Mahan in the conversion of sinners were being "off set" by the adoption of their theory of sanctification.[117] After speaking highly of Finney's revival labors the report stated: "Yet, as the result of much observation, as well as of careful inquiry, (through the friends quite as much as through the opposers of Oberlin,) during the last five years, it is our most decided conviction, that whatever of truly benevolent spirit--of humility--or of zeal for the conversion of souls, may exist in the institution, remains there not in consequence, but in spite of their theory of sinless perfection."[118] It accused Oberlin of talking much about a "higher standard of religion," while the actual tendency of their doctrine was to lower the standard. It especially emphasized the tendency of the system to "lower down the demands of God's law," hence to "foster spiritual pride," and to "cherish egotism, self-ignorance, and carnal security."[119] It held up before the Oberlinites the dangers of Antinomian Perfectionism, with an interesting observation that they might be tending to another extreme. The report said:

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[117] Presbytery of Cleveland, An Exposition of the Peculiarities, Difficulties and Tendencies of Oberlin Perfectionism" (Cleveland: Printed by T. H. Smead, 1841), p. 78.

[118] Ibid.

[119] Ibid., p. 79.

> Under the influence of habits acquired through a better theory, and with no small anxiety for the credit of their principles, and having before their eyes the scandal of a system earlier developed, to warn them, its advocates may not *at once* run into *some* of the practices into which certain other Perfectionists have gone; such as the disuse of the ordinances of the gospel, and of religious ceremonies. With their solicitude to avoid even the appearance of these things, and under the influence of their doctrine of *dietetic* or *physiological depravity*, not a few of them perhaps will run into the other extreme, and make religion to consist mainly in things outward, especially in "physiological habits."[120]

This observation was extremely accurate, with a view to the almost inexorable tendency of Oberlin Perfectionism to run into moralism. The closing comment of this report was also predictive of the tendencies of those who followed the Mahan line on perfectionism, rather than Finney's radical "natural ability" scheme. It read:

> That the faculty with which not a few, who once abhorred Wesleyan Perfectionism, have been led to embrace a theory far more extravagant and pernicious, should be set down among the darker signs of the times, and as indicating the importance of more thorough and discriminating doctrinal instruction in the churches, as well as of a deeper reverence for the teachings of God's word, and less regard for the opinions of men.[121]

The result of these, and many other, criticisms of Oberlin Perfectionism was that Oberlin students were held suspect in both the Presbyterian and Congregational Churches. Because of the perfectionist and abolitionist sentiments inculcated at Oberlin, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions refused to commission her students. This led to the formation of the American Missionary Association, in 1846, which commissioned scores of Oberlin graduates for both foreign and home missions. After the Civil War this association transferred its foreign fields to the American Board, and devoted its efforts to a splendid program of Negro education and evangelism in the South.[122]

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[120] *Ibid.*, p. 84.

[121] *Ibid.*

George Duffield, a Presbyterian pastor in Detroit, made a spirited response to Finney's Perfectionism in his review of the Lectures on Systematic Theology. He was particularly concerned to point out the erroneous relations posited by Finney with regard to sanctification, justification, and the work of the Holy Spirit. Finney insisted that perfect, personal obedience to the law was the ground, or condition, of "immutable justification" before God. "According to his view," wrote Duffield, "there is no security whatever for the believer, whether on earth or in heaven, but what he can find in his own perfect holiness or obedience to the law. He is not fully justified at any moment, and cannot be fully assured of his admission to eternal life."[123] Again, because sanctification is the ground of justification, Duffield concludes, "A man, therefore, must become perfectly holy in order to forgiveness, in the very first instance; and the slightest deviation afterwards, throws him at once back as fully under the condemnation of the law, as he was at the first. To such absurdity and error is he led by disregarding the different relations in which God has been pleased to give the moral law to men."[124] There was here a collision of two points of view concerning the nature of man and the grace of God which could not be harmonized. Finney's optimistic view of human ability emphasized the role of nature in justification; Duffield's view emphasized grace in the Reformed tradition. Behind them stood the specters of Augustine and Pelagius.

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[122] Frank G. Beardsley, A Mighty Winner of Souls, Charles G. Finney; A Study in Evangelism (New York: American Tract Society, 1937), p. 137.

Duffield was certain that Finney missed the mark in this treatment of the work of the Holy Spirit in sanctification. "So far as we can gather from him," he exclaimed, "the Spirit's work in sanctification consists in simple illumination." He continued:

> He does indeed talk of the indwelling of the Spirit, --but we have searched in vain for anything beyond

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[123] George Duffield, The Theology of Professor Finney Reviewed and Put to the Test of the Sacred Scripture, First published in the Biblical Repository (Detroit: Garrett & Geiger, Printers, 1849), p. 439.

[124] Ibid., p. 448.

> His revealing Christ or presenting the truth. His language sometimes is so mystical as to have a strong bearing towards fanaticism. "When the will, the intellect, and the sensibility," says he, "are yielded to Him, He develops the intelligence and the sensibility by clear revelations of himself in all his offices and relations to the soul, confirms the will, mellows and chastens the sensibility by these divine revelations to the intelligence." What these revelations are, and how they are made; whether independently of the written Word, by some miraculous afflatus or inspiration, by an inward infallible light or monitor, or through the prayerful and believing perusal and use of the Scriptures, we are not informed.[125]

Since Finney believed that man's obligations must tally with his knowledge, and to the extent of his ignorance he is free from sin, he was bound to limit the office of the Holy Spirit in favor of human ability. Duffield eagerly grasped at this point as self-evidently contrary to the gospel. He wrote:

> When, therefore, he says that men are "naturally able to be entirely sanctified," he must and can only mean, that left to themselves, without any extensive aid of the Spirit of God, or the redemption through Jesus Christ--without the gospel and its influences--they can be perfectly holy--an assertion directly at war with the declaration of the apostle, "not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to think any thing as of ourselves," and of Christ "as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me--without me ye can do nothing." Of what use would the gospel be, and where would be its necessity, if men are naturally able to be entirely sanctified, unless, indeed, our author should respond, that it is to secure and develop a higher style or degree of perfect holiness. Every act of obedience in order to be such at all, to be justly accounted

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[125] Ibid., p. 717.

> holiness, according to his view, must be perfect holiness.[126]

Finney had no support for his perfectionist scheme in the Old School Presbyterian Church, and it was abundantly clear that he had not carried the New School Church with him. His scheme was almost equally unpopular in the Congregational Church at large. In this state of affairs, it was with more than casual interest that the _Oberlin Evangelist_ announced a new ally, Lyman Beecher of Lane Seminary.

> It was with no ordinary emotions of pleasure that we read in the Boston Morning Chronicle the following article. The doctrine of sanctification by simple faith in Christ as well as the twin doctrine of justification, will be regarded as "_articulus stantis vel cadentis ecclesiae_," [an article by the reception or rejection of which the church must stand or fall]. May God prosper his own work in Lane Seminary, and bless Dr. Beecher's efforts to spread the work among the Christians and ministers of New England!
>
> This news has filled our hearts with gratitude and joy, not chiefly, we trust, because the views expressed are our own--the very same which we have these many years sought to disseminate and urge upon the church, but because they now come from such a quarter as raises our hope that they will at least be examined with candor, thoroughness, and without prejudice.[127]

It must be judged that such joy was short-lived, for even with such a tail on Finney's kite, it would not fly.

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[126] _Ibid._, p. 727.

[127] "Dr. Beecher and Sanctification by Faith," _The Oberlin Evangelist_, VII, No. 13 (June 18, 1845), 102.

The tendency of Oberlin Perfectionism, as it spread outward among the churches, was divisive; for those who embraced the doctrine of entire sanctification were easily dissatisfied with the spiritual life of their congregations. Where ultraism prevailed, the spirit of "come-outism" appeared. Finney attempted to quell this spirit with a strong statement in favor of maintaining the covenant engagements of believers with their congregations. In December of 1840 he wrote:

> Since my last it has been suggested to me, that some of you have thought yourselves warranted in withdrawing from the particular churches to which you belong, because they lived in the open violation of their covenant engagements . . .
>
> Now, beloved, permit me to say, that although the churches to which you belong may have violated their covenant engagements everyday of their lives . . .; yet this cannot justify a disregard of the covenant on your part. The covenant was made by you all, with God, and with each other. If any of your brethren have violated the terms of the covenant, your business is to labor with them, patiently and perseveringly, in order to bring them to repentance; but not to consider yourselves at liberty to abandon or break the covenant, because they do.[128]

This was good advice, but difficult to follow in congregations where zeal for perfectionism was matched by fear of the threat of ultraism. An example of such a predicament is found in the letter of H. Brewster to Finney from Le Roy, New York. He wrote in reply to the "occasional letter" just quoted:

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[128] "Prof. Finney's Letters, No. 28.--To Believers in the Doctrine of Entire and Continued Sanctification in This Life, No. 4," The Oberlin Evangelist, II, No. 26 (December 16, 1840), 203.

> We need your advise (sic). We who have embraced the doctrine of entire Sanctification "in this life" by faith in Jesus Christ--and who belong to the Presbyterian Chh--had come to the same conclusion, that your Letter in the O.E. recommended, viz., to abide in the Chh. But we were early told, that we must be silent about our new views--or withdraw from the Chh--or they would cut us off--we said in reply, that we could not hold our peace, neither could we withdraw--that since we were (in the Providence of God) connected with this Chh when we were converted to this doctrine--we must remain and labour here. We were then urged vehemently to withdraw--and offered clean papers if we would go--but we still remain.[129]

In spite of Finney's continued admonitions, the ferment of perfectionism, compounded by the antislavery conflict, split many churches wide open. A letter from W. S. Kennedy to the editor of the Oberlin Evangelist in 1857 gives some perspective to two decades of Oberlin influence.

> It is possible that I should not have spoken of the Oberlin Congregational policy as "purposely dividing churches." I suppose the agitators would have preferred to have taken the churches whole, into their new arrangements; but that being impracticable, "purposely" or not, they did lamentably divide and distract them, by their preaching and other influences. This however is not charged particularly upon the Faculty of Oberlin College, as you affirm. I think some of them, particularly Mr. Finney, always deprecated it. But men representing Oberlin ideas, ecclesiasticism etc. and generally as "Oberlin men," assuredly were the principal disturbers. If they did not so intend, all the better for them; though the results were the same to the churches and to history.[130]

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[129] H. Brewster to Finney, December 21, 1840, Finney Papers, OCL.

[130] "The Oberlin Evangelist and Kennedy's Plan of Union," The Oberlin Evangelist, XIX, No. 7 (April 1, 1857), 51.

As in the case of the "new measures," Finney's views on sanctification let loose an impulse in the Church that he could not restrain. By 1845 even the Oberlin Evangelist was entertaining the possibility of "come-outism" under extreme conditions.

> The doctrines now advanced are plain and may be compressed into a nut-shell. A church is a body of Christ's professed followers. When they cease to follow Christ and follow Satan, they cease to be a church of Christ and become a synagogue of Satan, and all Christ's real children should forthwith come out from among them. Of course this should be done intelligently; yet with solemn decision.[131]

The problem with such a statement is obvious; as an operational definition, it lacked sufficient guidelines to inform an intelligent decision.

The impulse of sanctification to secession was heightened by the increasing antislavery conflict, and by the movement toward the formation of "Union Churches" over against the "sectarianism" of the denominations. In 1846 the Oberlin Quarterly Review, edited at this time by President Mahan and Finney, published a long article by Professor James A. Thome on "Come-outism and Come-outers." It was a vain attempt to interpret the Oberlin position. "Come-outism," Thome wrote, "is a term of modern coinage which has not found its way into the latest dictionaries . . ."[132] He explained that it

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131. "Secession From a Church," The Oberlin Evangelist, VII, No. 22 (October 22, 1845), 124. The italics are mine.

132. James A. Thome, "Come-outism and Come-outers," Oberlin Quarterly Review, Article XXXII (November, 1846), 160.

was an expression based on the command, "Come out of her, my people," in Revelation 18:4. He then attempted to differentiate carefully among the distinct forms of come-outism. In the first place the Church "that is hopelessly corrupt, and which therefore is delivered over by God to fierce plagues and terrible retributions, must be abandoned by the good, because, since there can be no benevolent reason for remaining in such a church, to remain in it would argue a bad motive, and consequently a participation in its guilt."[133] A second form occurs when a church takes "decided ground against the reformatory movements of the age," or against certain doctrines, or measures. In this case the action did not intimate that the church was hopelessly depraved; hence, a withdrawal would not be come-outism even if the case were used to sanction it. Under the first form, Churches depraved in their doctrines like the ritualistic Churches of Rome, the Greek, and Armenian Churches, come-outism was justified. But, under the second form, come-outism on the basis of "unionism," antislavery reform, and by implication, perfectionism, was not justified.

In fact, Oberlin as a colony, college, and church did not support come-outism, although its doctrines outside of Oberlin tended to be divisive. As late as 1859, the Oberlin

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[133] Ibid., p. 161.

Evangelist was yet attempting to pour oil on the troubled waters. An article, "Thoughts on Church Membership," stated, "The Church is not a human contrivance, but a divine constitution. It is not an arbitrary arrangement but a necessary appointment. It grows out of the existence of Christians." Then it emphasized, "The Church, notwithstanding many imperfections, is Christ's body; and it is therefore good enough for his disciples. That which does not unmake a Church does not warrant withdrawment from it. If it is imperfect as a body, so are its members as individuals. The Church has as much occasion for forbearance with those who belong to it, as each one of its members can have to bear with the Church."[134] This statement may be interpreted as marking the end of ultraism in the Oberlin tradition of the holy community. The slavery question, and the Civil War, contravened all other issues in 1860.

The idea of the Church as a holy community in terms of the Oberlin doctrine of perfection, ceased to blossom profusely in Oberlin, but its seed was planted in other fertile fields and continued to flower. Benjamin B. Warfield, in his extended criticism of Oberlin Perfectionism at the turn of the nineteenth century, wrote:

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[134] "Thoughts on Church Membership," The Oberlin Evangelist, XXI, No. 2 (January 19, 1859), 13.

> The "Higher Life Movement" which swept over the English-speaking world--and across the narrow seas into the Continent of Europe--in the third quarter of the nineteenth century, was not without traits which derived from Oberlin. And Mahan lived to stand by the side of Pearsall Smith at the great Oxford Convention of 1874, and to become with him a factor in the inauguration of the great "Keswick Movement," which has brought down much of the spirit and many of the forms of teaching of Oberlin Perfectionism to our own day. If Oberlin Perfectionism is dead, it has found its grave not in the abyss of non-existence, but in the Higher Life Movement, the Keswick Movement, the Victorious Life Movement, and other kindred forms of perfectionist teaching. They are its abiding monuments.[135]

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[135] Benjamin B. Warfield, Perfectionism, Volume II (New York: Oxford University Press, 1931), p. 213. Warfield's trenchant criticism of Oberlin Perfectionism rightly accuses Finney of Pelagianism. Commenting on Warfield's treatment of Finney's theology to a Cambridge University church historian, with whom I was working, he exclaimed "Warfield; he knew everything!" Warfield treated Mahan as exhibiting the errors of Wesleyan perfectionism, thus contrasting Finney's Pelagian scheme of "natural ability" with Mahan's "supernatural perfectionism" (Cf. pp. 73ff, 79, 95-97, 106). The normative passage on his view of sanctification may be found in Asa Mahan, Autobiography; Intellectual, Moral, and Spiritual (London: T. Woolmer, 1882), pp. 292ff. See also, Scripture Doctrine of Christian Perfection, 7th edition (Boston: Waite, Peirce & Co., 1844), and Out of Darkness into Light; or, the Hidden Life Made Manifest through Facts of Observation and Experience (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1875).

VII. THE CHURCH AND ITS WORSHIP

A. The Unfolding Evangelical Patterns

1. The Puritan Tradition

The nature of the Puritan and Nonconformist dissent in the seventeenth century produced a pattern of worship that was chiefly didactic and intellectual. Elements of the catholic liturgical tradition, which contained aspects of the mysterious and the sacrificial, were stripped away. What remained was an excessive emphasis upon the auditory elements of worship. It may be argued that the Puritan tradition of worship was "prophetic" rather than "priestly"; and that it produced an auditory tradition which became normative in the Puritan and Evangelical segments of the American Church. This type of worship emphasized preaching, public prayer, and the singing of praise to God.

It is true that the Puritans recognized the importance of the Lord's Supper, and they expressed their concern for its frequent celebration as well as for the "fencing of the tables" against unworthy communicants. Nevertheless, it was the sermon that became the most prominent means of grace. Of the Puritans Horton Davies writes, "It was in the Sermon that the Bible, God's authoritative message for faith, conduct, and even the ordering of all their church 'ordinances' was heard by the expectant congregation, and it was in keeping with this sense of what is ultimate for them that the pulpit, with its great sounding-board and its red velvet cushion on which the sacred Book rested, had pride of place in their sanctuaries."[1] The Puritans did not believe that the church should be divided into chancel and nave, that is, into a more and a less sacred part; therefore, in the Puritan meeting-house the Holy Table was placed beneath the central dominance of the pulpit. The Holy Table, in no sense an altar, had neither cross nor candles upon it; but during the celebration of the Sacrament there was a fine white tablecloth upon which was set the paten, flagon, and chalices, which were reverently carried to the people in their pews that they might receive the elements of the Holy Communion.[2] As the emphasis upon preaching continued into the eighteenth century among the Nonconformist heirs of the earlier dissent, the "Lord's Day Lecture" became the occasion of an intellectual and apologetic exercise which reflected the anti-supernaturalism of the Age of Reason. The result of this development was that prayers and praises tended to become the mere "preliminaries" to the sermon.[3]

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[1] Horton Davies, Worship and Theology in England; From Watts and Wesley to Maurice, 1690-1850 (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1961), p. 31.

[2] Ibid., p. 32.

[3] Ibid., p. 96.

The controversies over "set" and "free" prayers continued throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The Puritans and Nonconformists were well-schooled in the abuses and dangers of any formulary of prayer, but they seemed oblivious to the peculiar problems associated with extemporaneous prayer. The dichotomy of views which developed between the Anglicans and the Puritans and Nonconformists on the matter of prayer became firmly set in the two traditions. The Anglicans conceived of common prayer as characterized by uniformity, dignity, comprehensiveness, order, and tradition; while the Puritans and Nonconformists thought of public prayer as distinguished by spontaneity, simplicity, intimacy, particularity, and flexibility.[4] The strength of the Puritan tradition of prayer was that it encouraged the minister to pray for his congregation out of his knowledge of their particular circumstances. Such a "pastoral prayer" met a need which the generalities of "set" prayers could never reach. However, this strength was frequently overcome by the tendency toward didacticism, prolixity, and incoherence in extemporaneous prayer.

The Puritan insistence upon the warrant of Scripture, and the Anglican comprehension of those traditions not contradicted by the Bible, resulted in divergent conceptions of the character of praise. Whereas the Anglicans maintained the tradition of chanting the Psalms and Canticles, a characteristic of the Daily Offices of the Medieval Church, the Puritans and Nonconformists rejected that tradition in favor of the congregational singing of metrical psalms, and hymns. The retention of trained choirs in the Church of England, and the rich heritage of anthems and sacred cantatas, as well as chant settings, composed to the glory of God by English composers from Purcell to Gustav Holst, Vaughn Williams, and Benjamin Brittain, constitute a magnificent contribution to the culture.[5] The Puritans and Nonconformists objected to the intricacies of plainsong and polyphony as unsuited to the capacities of the ordinary congregation. Such music, requiring a trained choir, tended to take from the whole congregation their right, and duty, to sing the praises of God. Although they permitted the minister to be the voice of the congregation in prayer, they would not abide a choir displacing the voice of the congregation in praise. Another objection of the Puritans and Nonconformists was that the extra-Biblical anthems, and even some of the psalms and canticles, were un-

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[4] Ibid., p. 29.

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5. The Sung Morning and Evening Prayer Services at the Chapels of King's College and St. John's College in Cambridge, as well as the Sung Eucharist, are daily reminders of the rich tradition of liturgical music and prayers in the Church of England. Every Cathedral Choir throughout Great Britain maintains this magnificent tradition.

acceptable for congregational praise, usually because they represented the old dispensation and could not be adapted for the present context of worship.

The Puritan contribution to praise was the composition of metrical psalms which were set to relatively simple tunes that the whole congregation could sing. Clement Marot, as is well-known, had been the pioneer in this venture, but because the Puritans thought the psalms needed revision the beginnings of English hymnody appeared. It was Isaac Watts, a Congregationalist, who made the transition from psalm to paraphrase to hymn. He summarized the first step in his aim in this sentence: "In all places I have kept my grand design in view; and that is to teach my author to speak like a Christian."[6] Horton Davies has made the interesting suggestion that the important role in Nonconformist praise played by the hymns became the equivalent of the creeds; that is, the hymns made lyrical rather than metaphysical attestations of faith.[7]

A change in the climate of worship occurred in the eighteenth century as the effects of "rationalistic moralism" were felt within the Church. Dissenting worship maintained the elements and order of worship inherited from the Puritans and Nonconformists, but it lost the old sense of majesty and awe, the sense of being in the presence of the sovereignty of God. Horton Davies has pointed out a significant transition toward subjectivity in worship, which reached a climax in the nineteenth century. He wrote:

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[6] Quoted in Horton Davies, op. cit., p. 34.

[7] Ibid.

> The Calvinistic Independents and Presbyterians had not entirely capitulated to the Deists in their theology, but they shared with them an exaltation of reason and a concentration upon man as God's chief handiwork. The result was that there was a stress on the sociable aspect in worship. Whereas the chief stress in Puritan worship was on the downward, revelational movement of God in sermon and Sacrament, now a new stress was given to the hymns and to the importance of the congregation. At times there was even a subjectivity in the worship, whereas objectivity had characterized the metrical psalmody of the previous century. Now Watts sings "When _I_ survey the wondrous Cross" or "Give _me_ the wings of faith to rise" or "Come _we_ that love the Lord." This subjective emphasis may be open to some criticism, but it is the less heinous when it is recalled that for real subjectivity and wallowing in sentimental feelings we must turn to Victorian hymnody.[8]

The tendencies of "auditory worship" in the sermon, in prayer, and in praise, discussed above, were inherent in the Puritan tradition and thus were transplanted into the American Church. There they became incorporated into the common liturgy of the evangelical synthesis of the nineteenth century.

In the Calvinist tradition, Puritan ministers bore the title not of "priest" but of "Minister of the Word of God"; and the Sacraments were for them the _sigilla_ _verbi_ _divini_, the seals of the Divine Word. As a general rule, the Puritan tradition inculcated a high view of the Sacraments, and in the seventeenth century a merely memorialist, or Zwinglian, doctrine was seldom held among the Puritans and Nonconformists. In the eighteenth century, however, religious ardor cooled somewhat under the impact of the Enlightenment, and "memorialism" became more popular. Nevertheless, regardless of the high view of the Sacraments, the Puritans would not tolerate enclosing the Holy Table with communion rails, or elevating its position in a chancel, nor would they tolerate receiving the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper in a kneeling position under the sign of the cross. Without pressing the figure, it may be said that the Puritan cultus stressed the objectivity of the downward movement of revelation and grace, while the Anglican cultus stressed the upward movement of spiritual aspiration toward God in the human response.

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[8] _Ibid_., pp. 99-100.

With a view to the shape of the liturgy used by the early Puritans, it must be emphasized that during the reign of Elizabeth, Nonconformist preachers who were tried and punished for the crime of separation from the Established Church ordered their worship according to the "Form used at Geneva."[9] Even as late as the days of Calamy and Baxter, the prejudice against ritual services commonly attributed to the Puritans had not become widespread. As Puritan practice became more and more informed by narrow and strong antipathies to the Anglican liturgy the reaction against any formulary of the liturgy hardened to the point that the concept of "liturgy" was lost from view. In the eighteenth century, English Independents and orthodox Presbyterians worshipped in fundamentally the same way. Until late in the century, when evening services were introduced on Sunday, there were morning and afternoon services, and the evening was spent in pious families going over the lessons acquired from the preaching of the day. The Bury Street Independent Meeting, London, recorded their order of worship in these words:

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[9] Charles W. Baird, The Presbyterian Liturgies; Historical Sketches, first published under the title of Eutaxia (1855), and Chapter on Liturgies (1856), (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1960), p. 152.

> In the morning we begin with singing a psalm, then a short prayer follows to desire the Divine Presence in all the following parts of worship; after that, about half an hour in the exposition of some portion of Scripture, which is succeeded by singing a psalm or an hymn. After this the minister prays more at large, for all the variety of blessings, spiritual and temporal, for the whole congregation, with confession of sins, and thanksgiving for mercies; petitions also are offered up for the whole world, for the churches of Christ, for the nation in which we dwell, for all our rulers and governors, together with any particular cases which are represented. Then a sermon is preached, and the morning worship concluded with a short prayer and the benediction.[10]

The second psalm, or hymn of praise, was frequently after the exposition of Scripture, and among orthodox Presbyterians the long prayer of intercession was generally placed after the sermon; but, as indicated above, the Independents usually preferred it before the sermon.[11]

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[10] Quoted in Horton Davies, op. cit., p. 101.

In the Bury Street Church the celebration of the Lord's Supper was held on the first Lord's Day of every month, and was strictly limited to members of the church who had signed the covenant. The institution of the Lord's Supper was read, either out of the Gospel according to Matthew, or from the First Epistle to the Corinthians; and, as the sermons of the day dwelt upon the design of the Sacrament, or upon the sufferings of Christ, there was seldom any exhortation after the institution was read. The bread was then blessed with prayer, broken by the minister, and then the plate of bread was raised in the hands of the minister with such words as these: "This is the body of Christ, which was broken for you; take it and eat ye all of it in remembrance of our Saviour who died for us."[12] Then the bread was delivered by the pastor to the deacons who carried it to the members of the church in their pews. In a like manner the pastor poured out the wine, asked a blessing on the cup, and distributed it to the deacons who then carried the chalices to the people. In many churches the pastor frequently quoted appropriate texts from the Bible to awaken the faith, hope and joy of the communicants as the elements were administered to the people. The closing part of the service consisted of a psalm or hymn, a collection for the necessities of the poor, and then with particular prayers for the members of the church, together with thanksgiving and the final benediction, the service was concluded.[13]

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[11] Ibid.

[12] Quoted from the Bury Street Church service in Ibid., p. 102.

Horton Davies reports that the doctrine of the Sacrament was formally Zwinglian, in its symbolical and memorialist interpretation, but that the Communion discourses and prayers implied a doctrine of the "Real Presence." Moreover, the old Puritan tradition of a service of preparation on the Friday afternoon preceding the Sacrament Sunday indicated that the Lord's Supper was understood to be the climax of Christian worship and a source of spiritual nourishment in grace.[14] Furthermore, he establishes that this form of worship practised by the Bury Street Church was characteristic of the tradition of the orthodox Dissent in the early eighteenth century.[15] These orthodox Calvinists, both Independents and Presbyterian, were deeply involved with their stand against the inroads of

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[13] The actual report of the service is quoted in Ibid., pp. 102-103.

[14] Ibid., p. 103.

[15] Ibid., p. 104.

Deism, but their worship, toward the end of the century, showed that they were introducing some innovations under the demands of the new age. The introduction of evening services has already been mentioned. A second change was that the local churches were losing their isolation in the celebration of union occasions such as ordinations, and the dedication of new church edifices. Of great significance was the impact of the Evangelical Revival, which was being felt in the final decades of the century in the renewal of the mid-week prayer services of the congregation. Finally, it became more common for ministers of the old Dissent to read their sermons, a radical departure from the early Puritan extemporary tradition. This was mainly a reaction to the style of preaching developed by the Methodist "enthusiasts."[16] Davies concludes that the Methodists were less inhibited by the traditions of the past, and more sensitive to the popular culture. It was Methodism, therefore, that tended to shape the new developments in worship, which the old Dissent imitated, as he put it, "at a decorous distance."[17]

Perhaps the most obvious difference between Anglican and Nonconformist forms of worship, in the mid-eighteenth century, may be found in their contrasting views of ecclesiastical architecture and furnishings. Nonconformists had their first opportunity to erect church buildings after the "Glorious Revolution" of 1688. According to Martin S. Briggs, 2,418 buildings were registered for public worship in the years 1689 to 1700 by Congregationalists, Baptists, and Presbyterians. Many of these would have been disused churches, houses, schoolrooms, even warehouses, adapted for Nonconformist worship; only a few were new church buildings.[18] Briggs lists twenty-three buildings erected between 1688 and 1721, and it is from these buildings that a few generalizations may be drawn concerning the style of Nonconformist church buildings in the early eighteenth century.[19] Briggs says of these churches that "both large and small are of a modest, retiring and domestic nature, without spires or definitely ecclesiastical features externally."[20] They were built simply of brick, the sloping roofs covered with plain tiles, and without gables. The doorways had columns similar to the domestic architecture of the period, but without embellishment. The windows had semicircular or flat arches above them, and were divided into small panes with strong leadwork. This unobtrusive exterior appearance was due to a fundamental desire for simplicity, but also for purposes of economy and the desire not to attract the attention of the incensed High Church mobs of the period.

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[16] Ibid., pp. 107-108.

[17] Ibid., p. 113.

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[18] Martin S. Briggs, Puritan Architecture and Its Future (London: Lutterworth Press, 1946), p. 22.

[19] Ibid., p. 23.

[20] Ibid., p. 24.

The interior of these Nonconformist churches was marked by simplicity, and a kind of austere dignity. The central position of the pulpit and the Holy Table, and the maximum use of space for seating by means of galleries were standard features. The interior style, as well as the exterior, had little of the "churchly appearance" but was marked by the commonplaces of English domestic architecture during the Age of Reason. The great contrast between these plain Nonconformist churches and the Anglican churches of the medieval and Gothic tradition is clearly seen. A change in this tradition occurred through the influence of Sir Christopher Wren (1632-1723), who first attempted to conceptualize in architecture the nature of Reformed worship. His chief endeavor was to erect churches that should be "auditories," churches where all the people could both see and hear. He believed that new parish churches should be built to accommodate about two thousand persons, and wrote with regard to this project: "The Churches must therefore be large; but still in our reformed Religion, it should seem vain to make a parish-church larger than that all who are present can both see and hear. The Romanists, indeed, may build larger Churches, it is enough if they hear the Murmur of the Mass, and see the Elevation of the Host, but ours are to be fitted for Auditories."[21] Many of his churches in London served as models for Nonconformists in England, especially those of the Puritan tradition, whether Anglican, Baptist, Presbyterian, or Congregationalist in New England. His concept that churches should be "auditories" had a marked influence upon American churches; however, the contrast between the strictly functional purpose of the Nonconformist churches, and the symbolism utilized in the decoration of the Anglican churches continued. In the Puritan tradition, true holiness was to be found in the saints as the living temples of the Holy Spirit; not in beautifully appointed churches, which might cause a sensuous distraction to the worshipper. In a well-turned sentence, Horton Davies comments, "If Anglicans venerated the holiness of beauty, Puritans respected the beauty of holiness."[22]

2. The American Tradition

Attention has been given to the development of the Puritan and Nonconformist traditions of worship in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries because these are precisely the traditions which were transplanted in the New England culture. It is abundantly clear that Finney, as a representative figure of his era, lived and thought within the context of this New England culture as it was modified by the influences of the frontier and the great awakenings. These influences of the environment had been great during the colonial period, and they continued unabated into the middle period.

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[21] Stephen Wren, Parentalia: or, Memoirs of the Family of the Wrens: viz. of Matthew Bishop of Ely, Christopher Dean of Windsor, etc., But Chiefly of Sir Christopher Wren (London: Printed for T. Osborn in Gray's Inn, 1750), p. 319.

[22] Horton Davies, op. cit., p. 37. Acknowledgement is made of the assistance Professor Davies has provided in this /study

The harsh necessities of frontier life reshaped the inherited traditions of worship in three ways. Firstly, the inherited tradition of simplicity in church architecture was reduced to utter plainness by the lack of skilled craftsmen, of materials, and of money. Winthrop S. Hudson has emphasized that American Protestantism developed a "make do" attitude toward the place of worship.[23] Secondly, the status of the ministers was considerably reduced as the voice of the laity became decisive in the determination of church affairs. The New England Congregational concept of the ministry as a "speaking aristocracy," with powers independent of the laity, rapidly eroded under the impact of individualism fostered by

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(Cont.) study, in selecting bibliography, and preparing the analysis of this section. Visitation of Nonconformist and Anglican churches in England has heightened my awareness of architectural style and the indebtedness of American church architecture to the English traditions.

23. Winthrop S. Hudson, American Protestantism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 25.

the conditions of life on the frontier. It was no longer possible to impose a liturgical formulation upon the people as normative; and the ways of worship became expressive of the general level of an impoverished culture under the threat of barbarism. Thirdly, the Puritan tradition, which had already undergone extensive modifications in England and America, was subjected to a critical confrontation with the peculiar developments of evangelical revivalism during the Second Awakening. During this era of "new measures" for promoting revivals, with its principal emphasis upon the conversion of sinners almost to the exclusion of the edification of the saints, the liturgical life of the American Church suffered further erosion. Writing in the 1850's, Baird could say, "To this day, Great Britain and America offer the sole instances of Calvinistic Churches without a Liturgy."[24]

It has been argued that the Old School view of the church and ministry was maintained at Princeton, and that this view was informed largely by the Scottish tradition inculcated by Witherspoon, then Miller and Hodge. Despite the fact that this tradition had a liturgy approved and received by the Church of Scotland in the *Book of Common Order* of 1564, and the *Westminster Directory* of 1645, the popular ways of worship had become almost void of liturgical significance by the beginning of the nineteenth century. Thus, the Scotch-Irish immigrants brought with them a violent hostility to everything that savored of a liturgical nature. It was not until the Euchologion was published and received in 1867 that the Church of Scotland experienced a general liturgical reform.[25] American churches received little liturgical impetus from this tradition until the 1850's, through the liturgical studies of men like Charles W. Baird, and Charles Hodge.

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[24] Charles W. Baird, *op. cit.*, p. 255.

The liturgical impulse of the Mercersburg Theology has been discussed already, as it presented a real departure from the point of view espoused by Finney in his Lectures on Revivals of Religion. However, at this juncture it is helpful to note the comments of the Mercersburg historian, Philip Schaff, as he characterized American ways of worship to his German audience. And what he has to say of the Puritan tradition may be said of the Scottish tradition as well, since they reinforced one another in the "presbygational" period of 1801 to 1837.

> Finally, as to the form of worship, Puritanism stands at the extreme of simplicity and meagreness. In this, also, it goes beyond Calvin. Even those

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[25] The genealogy of the Book of Common Order may be found in John M. Barkley, The Worship of the Reformed Church, Ecumenical Studies in Worship, No. 15, edited by J. G. Davies and A. Raymond George (London: Lutterworth Press, 1966), pp. 128-129. The background of Scottish hostility to liturgical forms is discussed in Charles W. Baird, *op*. *cit*., pp. 255-256.

> symbolical forms and ancient church usages, which he either approved or at least tolerated as innocent, it rejects on account of their real or supposed connection with the abominated Catholicism; such as the cross, the altar, the clerical costume, all liturgical forms of prayer, and the church festivals, even Christmas, Easter, and Whitsuntide.[26]

As he continued, Schaff pointed out the change of prospects which he envisaged.

> Of late, however, they have considerably softened and changed in this respect. The former aversion to church steeples, bells, organs, and choirs has almost disappeared; and even the Gothic architecture, which really grew out of the Catholic idea of worship, is now frequently employed in Puritanic New England. In general, as taste and artistic talent are cultivated, prejudice against any union of religion with art will disappear, and Christianity will be seen to be a thoroughly penetrating and transforming leaven for architecture, painting, sculpture, music, and poetry, as well as for everything else.[27]

This high-church view, however, did not penetrate the life of the American Church to any great degree during the period under scrutiny in this thesis.

The Methodists, like the Puritans and Presbyterians, had lost sight of their liturgical tradition. John Wesley was undoubtedly a high churchman of a peculiar type, and The Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America, and A Collection of Psalms and Hymns for the Lord's Day, were prepared and published by him in London, 1784, as the basis for worship. The Sunday Service was a revision of The Book of Common Prayer, somewhat along Puritan lines. In his letter from Bristol, September 9, 1784, he listed the four alterations he had made:

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[26] Philip Schaff, America. A Sketch of Its Political, Social, and Religious Character (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of the Harvard University Press, 1961), pp. 114-115.

[27] Ibid.

> 1. Most of the holy-days (so called) are omitted, as at present answering no valuable end.
> 2. The service of the LORD'S DAY, the length of which has been often complained of, is considerably shortened.
> 3. Some sentences in the offices of Baptism, and for the Burial of the Dead, are omitted.--And,
> 4. Many Psalms left out, and many parts of the others, as being highly improper for the mouths of a Christian Congregation.[28]

This liturgy provided by Wesley, and established at Baltimore, did not last for long. The second, and also the last edition of the Sunday Service, was published in London in 1786. In 1792 the sacramental rites, the occasional offices, and the Articles of Religion were incorporated in the Discipline, but the rest of the book disappeared. The demise of "Mr. Wesley's liturgy," suggests Bard Thompson, came through unpopularity and disuse, not by official abrogation.[29] The general lack of education, culture and refinement, as well as the dominant evangelical convictions of the era, were the powerful forces operating against any traditional formulation of the liturgy.

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[28] Cf. Bard Thompson, Liturgies of the Western Church (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Co., 1961), p. 417.

[29] Ibid.

This dominant evangelical-revivalistic tradition prevailed during the ante-bellum period; it emphasized the auditory elements of worship, and principal attention was given to the preaching of the gospel. It is clear that Finney took into his Puritan heritage many of the elements of Methodist evangelicalism; and the Oberlin Evangelist frequently noted the characteristics of the Methodist ministry with approval. An article on "The Early Methodist Preaching" identifies some of the areas where the Finneyites shared a common perspective. Among "the characteristic peculiarities of the early and effective Methodist preaching," the author noted first, and as most important, "that the saving elementary truths of the gospel were continually reiterated." Second, the old Methodist preaching was described as "notably peculiar in its style." The author continued, "They preached to the people. Coming out themselves from the people--all their sympathies being with the people, and withal, making it their one great object to reach the people, their appeals were adapted to their object, and hence became effective." Third, the early Methodist preachers had "the almost general habit of giving

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30. "The Early Methodist Preaching," The Oberlin Evangelist, XIV, No. 8 (April 14, 1852), 62.

experimental illustrations from their own personal religious history." Fourth, "They aimed at direct results." And fifth, the author dwelt upon the "extemporaneous delivery of sermons."[30]

It is concluded here that the unfolding evangelical patterns of worship were dominated by a Puritan bias against liturgical formulations, and that the revivals and general impoverishment of the culture only heightened this bias. Neither the Presbygational nor the Methodist Churches were affected by the kind of liturgical reform that operated in the Reformed Church, under the auspices of the Mercersburg Theology, or in the Episcopal Church through the impulse given by the Tractarian Movement. "Certainly there was sore need of an aesthetic reform in the churches of sixty years ago," wrote R. E. Thompson in 1895. He continued:

> Methodism, with its rough-and-ready utilitarianism and directness, had swept away the last vestige of care for a fitting environment of the congregation's worship and life. The churches of that era were as ugly and cheerless as they were uncomfortable. Only the imposing mass of the pulpit symbolized the absorption of all other functions in that of the preacher.[31]

Again, he wrote:

> As of the church edifices, so of the worship seen in them. There was no doubt a vast amount of

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[31] R. E. Thompson, A History of the Presbyterian Churches in the United States (New York: The Christian Literature Co., 1895), p. 98.

> living conviction as to the great realities on which the church is built, and an intense earnestness of personal feeling in the approach to God.[32]

This "living conviction" was not expressed so much in common worship as in the private devotions the believer had in the light of his own Bible reading and personal prayers. The Puritan awareness of the individual before God had remained, but the corporate nature of the "errand into the wilderness" had been lost. Finney's conversion experience, "shut up" alone with his Bible, then praying alone in the woods, followed by an overwhelming experience of the Holy Spirit--this became the new model of the "errand into the wilderness."

B. Common Worship and the Liturgy

1. Preaching and Prayer

With respect to the Church gathered together for worship, Finney was especially concerned with preaching, wherein he gave his intellectual and physical energies entirely to the endeavor of pressing home to his hearers the truth of the gospel as he understood it. There was nothing in the religious environment in which he labored, as has been discussed, which would have led him to a serious consideration of the liturgical heritage of the Magisterial Reformation. He lived and thought entirely within the prevailing views of worship which were characteristic of the Evangelical synthesis. Therefore, it may be argued that Finney was a representative figure with respect to ways of common worship, and his popularity doubtless increased the tenacity with which these ways of worship were held.

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[32] *Ibid.*, p. 99.

The last Sunday Joseph P. Thompson stood in the pulpit of the Broadway Tabernacle in New York as pastor, in April, 1857, he delivered a historical discourse in which he referred to Finney's labors in that church. His estimate and description of Finney's preaching is here quoted at some length:

> Mr. Finney's method of preaching was peculiar. Gifted with fine powers of analysis, which were early disciplined in the study of the law, he has, also, the constructive faculty in a high degree; so that he can at once dissect an error or sophism, analyze a complex feeling, motive, or action, and build a logical argument with cumulative force. With these he combines a vivid imagination, and the power of graphic description. Nor, with the seeming sharpness and severity of his logic and the terrors which his fancy portrays, is he wanting in tenderness of feeling. His experimental knowledge of divine truth is deep and thorough, and his knowledge of the workings of the human mind under that truth is extended and philosophical. Hence his preaching searches the conscience, convinces the judgment, and stirs the will either to assent or to rebellion. His elocution, though unstudied and so sometimes inelegant, is yet strangely effective; and in the proper mood of an assembly, a pause, a gesture, an emphasis, an inflection, an exclamation, will produce the highest oratorical effects. The conviction of sincerity attends his words; the force of an earnest mind goes with his logic.
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> His sermons in the Tabernacle were unwritten, and were usually preached from a brief lying before

> him. But though extempore in their dress, they were not unstudied as to their matter or their form. In yonder study, the first pastor of the Tabernacle had a huge slate, upon which he would sketch an outline of a sermon, as an architect sketches his plan, the painter his groups. This done, he would betake himself to prayer, or pace the room in earnest thought. By and by, perhaps the whole plan would be effaced, and another substituted for it; or the first would be recast in the vigorous mould of a mind kindled by prayer, till it came forth glowing with the fire of the Holy Ghost. Then he was ready for the pulpit, and therefore God was with him in the pulpit.[33]

Another source of description of Finney's style of preaching, closer to his subject, and more critical in his analysis, is found in the estimate by John Campbell, given in 1850. Campbell was at that thime the pastor of the Tabernacle in Finsbury, London, and also of the Tottenham Court Road Chapel, both of which had been built for Whitefield, and retained the evangelical vigor of his ministry there. He was also the editor of the _British Banner_, and during the nine months in which Finney preached in the Tabernacle, at his invitation, he used the pages of his journal to report on Finney's preaching. At the end of the first three months of Finney's labors there, Campbell gave the following account:

> As many of our readers are anxious to know the progress of Mr. Finney in the metropolis, we shall give a few words of report. He continues, as heretofore, to preach five times a week, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday, and latterly attending, also,

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[33] Joseph P. Thompson in _The Last Sabbath in the Broadway Tabernacle_ (New York, 1857), quoted in George F. Wright, _op. cit._, pp. 302-304.

and delivering an address, at the prayer meeting on the Monday evening, and then on Thursday evening meeting all inquirers. This is an amount of labor which, at this season of the year, it may be supposed that most men would sensibly feel, if not sink under; but with Mr. Finney it is otherwise. We have never heard him complain of fatigue, and scarcely ever say the weather is hot! He seems, indeed, in his very element. This remarkable man would appear destined by Providence for this species of labor. He speaks with an ease altogether peculiar; to a large extent, his style is colloquial, interspersed, nevertheless, with lofty flights and impetuous bursts of a more oratorical character, when the delivery becomes intense, the voice acquires an ocean swell, accompanied by very energetic action. But these bursts are never long continued; he quickly returns to an easy level, and for many minutes together proceeds in a state of earnest repose, during which the address is colloquial, but still with a measure of inflection, always forcible and always solemn. It is a peculiar sort of style, altogether unlike that of any other preacher we ever heard; so much so, that simple people, whose taste has been formed upon the established model, have difficulty in considering it preaching at all. They scarcely know what to call it. It is speaking, they say, and they are not greatly out. It is speaking such as may be heard in Parliament, and to large extent in courts of law. It would correspond very well with first-class Westminster oratory, and would have fitted its possessor for eminence at the bar, to which he was originally destined. His voice is clear and remarkably strong; nevertheless admitting, although for that purpose rarely used, of the deepest pathos. The hearer is principally affected by a sense of power; no pity is ever felt for the speaker. The idea that he must be fatigued, or that he will injure himself, never enters the mind, and it is somewhat strange that, while he never tires himself, it is the same with his hearers,--they never tire. Rarely, on Sabbath or week days, does he preach less than an hour and a half; and we remember no case of complaint, or any manifestation of weariness, even in London, of all places the least inclined to favor prolonged exercises of a religious character. To all appearance, they would sit till sunrise. Yet never a man had less of the meretricious or claptrap than Mr. Finney: the austerity of his manner,

> the severity of his address; the terrible force with which he comes down upon the ungodly, shutting up men in the prison-house of an awful accountability; and practical as his address to professors is,--yet it would seem somehow that the more he lashes the more he is loved. Never man had less of the soft and sentimental, the luscious in doctrine or spurious in experience, which has so frequently in London crowded houses with thoughtless, frivolous multitudes. This may be accounted for partly by his manner, perhaps very largely so and also by his matter; for while in one respect he is mechanical, in others he is original, natural, and very varied.[34]

This same author continued to report on Finney's preaching and effectiveness. After another month's observation Campbell was able to write:

> False fire there is none; all audible expression of emotion is suppressed. It is with Mr. Finney a first principle, that from first to last, the instrument with which men are to be moved is, the truth. . . . He has what may be deemed peculiarities--it may be some extravagances--both in thought and in expression; but these are only as the dust in the balance--things unworthy of mention, were it not that there may be, as in similar cases there have been, individuals ever ready, wantonly, enviously, or maliciously to misrepresent, to exaggerate, and to detract--individuals whose jaundiced eye fixes upon a real or imaginary spot, while utterly blind to the most transcendant and dazzling excellence. In dealing with the ungodly, Mr. Finney has no superior; for certain classes it may be doubted whether he has an equal--none such, at least, have we known. His addresses to the church are not less remarkable, when his object is to search, to probe, to convince of neglect, and impel to action.[35]

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[34] Quoted from the British Banner in The Oberlin Evangelist, XII, No. 19 (September 12, 1850), 139.

[35] Quoted from the British Banner in The Oberlin Evangelist, XII, No. 21 (October 9, 1850), 165.

Another Nonconformist minister in England, the Reverend George Redford, who edited the English edition of Finney's Lectures on Systematic Theology, commented on his preaching: "He sometimes uses a novel, perhaps a strange phraseology; but rarely anything to offend even critical ears. His energy is surprising, and the effect is delightful. HE WILL TEACH MANY OF US TO PREACH IN A NEW WAY."[36]

Finney's prayers, according to his biographer, were always an interesting and affecting part of public worship at Oberlin. It was apparently his practice to pray in public much as he must have done in his closet, as if there were none present except himself and God.[37] It may be argued that this is not an appropriate approach to the office of public prayer, but it was a natural extension of the emphasis upon personal, and private, devotion already mentioned. His petitions for the afflicted and needy persons of the parish were specific, and tender. Wright said that he "seemed to have every individual always before his mind."[38] Again, "His petitions were entirely free from formality, and were usually limited to objects of immediate interest, and only on occasions comprehended the country and the world at large." It is obvious that his prayers were extemporaneous, an extension of the spirit of prayer kindled in the closet.

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[36] George Redford to John Campbell, a portion of a letter quoted in an announcement of "Rev. Professor Finney, of Oberlin College, United States, to the Christian inhabitants of Finsbury, and of all other districts of London," May 1, 1850, Finney Papers, OCL.

[37] Cf. George F. Wright, op. cit., p. 274.

[38] Ibid.

As a general rule, Finney respected the regulation for which he voted at the New Lebanon Convention, that it was inappropriate to pray for persons by name in public without their permission. However, Wright recalls an extraordinary prayer for Professor M. in a Sunday morning service, in which Finney was "conducting the preliminary exercises" and Professor M. was to preach. He prayed that "Brother M. might be baptized with the Spirit, and might have great simplicity of speech and clearness of utterance given him, so that the great truths of the gospel should be made plain and brought within our reach, so that we should not all have to get up on tiptoe to understand what he was saying."[39]

Finney's public prayers, and it is assumed his private prayers, bore the mark of his teaching concerning "prevailing prayer," and the "prayer of Faith." This teaching seems to have been influenced by the practice and views of Father Nash, one of the chief stalwarts in the early Oneida revivals. Nash was reputed to practice this "new measure" by praying his horse into an adjacent pasture.[40] The "prayer of faith" was used to promote revivals, to reprimand "cold" ministers, and call attention to unrepentant sinners. In the use of this measure, members of Finney's "Holy Band" gained notoriety by conducting their private devotions in such a boisterous manner as to arrest the attention of passers-by on the streets.[41] Finney, himself, moved toward a more refined practice in public prayer after the Oneida campaign, but his early teaching and practice was magnified by the ultraists, as was the case with the other "new measures." Cross has indicated that Finney's remarkable psychological perception had probably discerned that the prayer of faith did its work within the individual's mind; but the more literal-minded evangelists seemed to have attributed its power to its influence upon God.[42] That this was a misunderstanding of Finney's teaching on the subject may be demonstrated by turning to his lecture on "Prevailing Prayer." There Finney said,

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[39] Ibid., p. 279.

> There are two kinds of means requisite to promote a revival; one to influence men, the other to influence God. The truth is employed to influence men, and prayer to move God. When I speak of moving God, I do not mean that God's mind is changed by prayer, or that his disposition or character is

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[40] Cf. Ephraim Perkins, A "Bunker Hill" Contest, A.D. 1826, etc. (Utica: Printed for the author, 1826), p. 65.

[41] Cf. Whitney R. Cross, The Burned-over District; The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850 (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1950), p. 179.

[42] Ibid.

> changed. But prayer produces such a change *in us* as renders it consistent for God to do as it would not be consistent for him to do otherwise. . . . So when Christians offer effectual prayer, their state of feeling renders it proper for God to answer them. . . . Whenever this change takes place in them, and they offer the right kind of prayer, then God, without any change in himself, can answer them.[43]

Prevailing prayer must be prayer for "a definite object"; and to be effectual, it must be "in accordance with the revealed will of God." Also, it must be "persevering prayer," neither random in object nor desultory in practice.

This view of prayer found a very congenial environment in the pietism of the Evangelical synthesis; but it was opposed by orthodox Calvinists on the grounds that it seemed to put prayer on a cause-and-effect basis submitting God to the importunity of the aggressively pious. The controversial literature of the period suggests that the ultraists, who believed they possessed the power of prevailing prayer, frequently developed an extremely censorious attitude.

To "prevailing prayer" was added the "prayer of faith." "That faith is an indispensable condition of prevailing prayer," said Finney, will not be seriously doubted. There is such a thing as offering benevolent desires, which are acceptable to God as such, that do not include the exercise of faith in regard to the actual reception of those blessings. But such desires are not prevailing prayer, the prayer of faith. God may see fit to grant the things desired, as an act of kindness and love, but it would not be properly in answer to prayer. I am speaking now of the kind of faith that insures the blessing."[44] This kind of faith was understood by Finney as a "state of mind" which might be acquired through the proper procedures. First, the believer must obtain "evidence" that God will bestow the blessing; and this evidence is found in the promises of the Scriptures. Second, the good desires one has must be cherished, so that the "least longing of desire" may be maintained and developed. "Don't grieve the Spirit," advised Finney. "Don't be diverted. Don't lose good desires, by levity, by censoriousness, by worldly-mindedness. Watch, and pray, and follow it up, or you will never pray the prayer of faith."[45] Finally, "entire consecration to God," and perseverance in prayer are requisites to the prayer of faith.

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[43] Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion* (edition cited), p. 52.

As Finney turned, in his lectures, from a discussion of the prayer of faith to the manner of conducting prayer meetings, he manifested two sides of his temperament, and incidentally revealed his subscription to a widely held, but seldom expressed, differentiation between private and public worship. In treating the subject of the prayer of faith above, the remarks are principally drawn from the lectures on prayer which show the mystical side of Finney's temperament. When he spoke about "secret prayer" he was deeply in accord with the Puritan tradition of private devotion, and the Evangelical ethos of pietism. Here he was guided by the mystical side of his temperament which manifested itself in his own conversion and prayer-life. But, when he spoke of "social prayer," auditory prayer offered in meetings assembled for united prayer, his remarks became very practical, revealing the pragmatic side of his temperament. Indeed, public prayer was esteemed as much for its practical effects upon the assembled people as it was for common, and elevated conversation with God. This, too, became deeply imbedded in the Evangelical tradition.

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[44] Ibid., pp. 73-74.

[45] Ibid., pp. 83-84.

Concerning the design of prayer meetings, Finney said, "One design of assembling several persons together for united prayer, is to promote union among Christians. Nothing tends to cement the hearts of Christians than prayer together."[46] Another design is to extend the spirit of prayer. "God has so constituted us, and such is the economy of his grace," wrote Finney, "that we are sympathetic beings, and communicate our feelings to each other."[47] A third grand design of social prayer is to move God. Once again Finney states that this does not mean that prayer changes the mind and feelings of God. Rather, the right kind of prayer produces a state of mind in which it becomes proper for God to bestow a blessing.[48] Another important design is the "conviction and conversion of sinners." Sinners were encouraged to come to prayer meetings, because "they are apt to be solemn, when they hear Christians pray."[49] Finney believed, through experience, that sinners were often convicted by hearing prayer. "And not only is it calculated to impress the minds of sinners," said Finney, "but when Christians pray in faith, the Spirit of God is poured out, and sinners are melted down and converted on the spot."[50]

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[46] Ibid., p. 124.

[47] Ibid., p. 125.

2. The Order of Worship and the Sacraments

On December 28, 1906, Williston Walker, Professor of Church History at Yale University, read a paper entitled "The Genesis of the Common Form of Public Worship in our Non-Liturgical Churches."[51] He pointed out that the "non-liturgical churches of America have followed an essentially rigid form of public worship." Further, he argued that form "still constitutes the underlying framework of their services, whatever modifications in its proportion and arrangement have been introduced."[52] He noted the interesting fact that these churches strongly repudiated any liturgical forms throughout most of their American history, yet they were almost tenacious in maintaining the sequence and general proportion of the elements of public worship. Walker asserted that the "substantially unvarying service of the House of God began with a brief invocation, followed by the reading of the Bible, to which a hymn succeeded, to be followed by the 'long prayer' of general supplication and thanksgiving." Then followed the sermon, a brief prayer, a second hymn, and the congregation was dismissed with the benediction.[53]

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[48] *Ibid*.

[49] *Ibid*.

[50] *Ibid*., p. 126.

[51] Cf. American Society of Church History, *Papers*, 2nd Series, I (1913), pp. 79-91.

After discussing the liturgical developments of the Reformation, with particular reference to the usage of Calvin, he traced the liturgy of common worship through the Westminster Directory. He asserted that Presbyterian practice was always influenced by the Westminster Directory in America, and that Presbyterian influence upon New England was decisive. He reported Professor Thomas C. Upham, writing of this usage in 1829, as outlining the service in these words:

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[52] *Ibid.*, p. 81.

[53] *Ibid.*, p. 82.

> The morning worship on the Sabbath, commonly commences with a short prayer, in which the blessing of God is invoked, in particular, on the solemn acts of worship, which are to be performed. Then follow the reading of the Scriptures, singing, renewed supplications and the preaching of the Word. The Sermon is followed by another prayer, and in the afternoon by prayer and singing. The services are closed by a benediction of the pastor.[54]

This, Walker noted, was the exact sequence of the Westminster Directory.

On this basis, it may be argued that this was the order of service with which Finney would be familiar from his New England and Presbyterian, as well as Congregational, associations. However, it must be assumed that he treated even this minimal liturgical tradition with impulsive freedom. John Campbell, in commenting upon Finney's services in the Tabernacle at Finsbury, London, remarked:

> His mode of conducting services is peculiar to himself. In a pastoral light, his devotional exercises are exceedingly defective. Although he has now preached three months in this great house, the hearer would scarcely ever have discovered that there was either church or pastor, or officer or schools, sickness or death, or any species of local labor requiring either prayer or sympathy: that there was a nation with its manifold wants, a senate, or a sovereign. Of a Queen or Parliament he has never been heard to make mention. So it is as to the world, the cause of missions, and so forth. The prayer grows out of the coming sermon; he speaks as if all flesh were before him: sin and

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[54] *Ibid.*, p. 90. Williston Walker amplified the development of this order of worship in the 18th century in *A History of the Congregational Churches in the United States* (New York: The Christian Literature Co., 1894), pp. 238-243.

> death, redemption, and its application to the wants of the perishing portion of the multitude,--these things alone concern Mr. Finney; and from beginning to end, the petition is made to bear upon the conversion of his auditory. This is the case as a rule, to which there is scarcely an exception. His prayers, too, are interspersed with a dash of peculiarity, sometimes of eccentricity; but the effect is to fix attention on the part of the fallen multitude, although it rather grates occasionally upon the spiritual portion of his auditory. Then, as to his sermons, there is the same uniformity: he announces his text in the bluntest, simplest way possible, and without a word of prelude or preparation, intimates what he means to do, by dividing his text; then he dashes on from head to head till he has done, or rather till his time is up, for his thought never seems to run out. Having finished that, he never fails to conclude with what he calls a few remarks, and these remarks are always peculiarly striking, pungent, and carefully drawn out of the subject. Then, in a moment, he stops short, prays, pronounces the benediction, and so the matter ends.[55]

How strongly Finney, himself, felt that the validity of the new measures had been demonstrated in their successes, and that they must displace the traditional "forms, and ceremonies, and fooleries," may be judged from the conclusion to his lecture on "Measures to Promote Revivals."

> FINALLY.--This zealous adherence to particular forms and modes of doing things, which has led the church to resist innovations in measures, savors strongly of fanaticism. And what is not a little singular, is that fanatics of this stamp are always the first to cry out "fanaticism." What is that but fanaticism in the Roman Catholic Church, that causes them to adhere with such pertinacity to their particular modes, and forms, and ceremonies, and fooleries? They act as if all these things were

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[55] Quoted from the British Banner in The Oberlin Evangelist, XII, No. 19 (September 12, 1850), 139.

> established by divine authority; as if there were a "Thus saith the Lord" for every one of them. Now we justly style this a spirit of fanaticism, and esteem it worthy of rebuke. But it is just as absolutely fanatical, for the Presbyterian church, or any other church, to be sticklish for her particular forms, and to act as if they were established by divine authority. The fact is, that God has established, in no church, any particular form, or manner of worship, for promoting the interests of religion. The scriptures are entirely silent on these subjects, under the gospel dispensation, and the church is left to exercise her own discretion in relation to all such matters. And I hope it will not be thought unkind, when I say again, that to me it appears, that the unkind, angry zeal for a certain mode and manner of doing things, and the overbearing, exterminating cry against new measures, SAVORS STRONGLY OF FANATICISM.
>
> The only thing insisted upon under the gospel dispensation, in regard to measures, is that there should be decency and order. "Let all things be done decently and in order." We are required to guard against all confusion and disorderly conduct. But what is decency and order? Will it be pretended that an anxious meeting, or a protracted meeting, or an anxious seat, is inconsistent with decency and order? I should most sincerely deprecate, and most firmly resist whatever was indecent and disorderly in the worship of God's house. But I do not suppose that by "order" we are to understand any particular set mode, in which any church may have been accustomed to perform their service.[56]

In this same lecture, Finney argued for the "new measures" on the basis of innovations in the order of worship which had become established. He believed that the order of worship was merely the "mode which they were used to."[57] He referred to the difficulty experienced in the introduction of a metrical version of the Psalms, and how he had observed a threatened schism in a Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia in 1828 if Watts' Psalms should be adopted by the congregation. He made great sport of the confusion experienced when the old method of "lining the hymns" was replaced by the introduction of psalm and hymn books. Then he recounted the development of choirs, pitchpipes, and instrumental music in the Church. Of extemporary prayers, he said, "How many people are there, who talk just as if the Prayer Book was of divine institution! And I suppose multitudes believe it is. And in some parts of the church a man would not be tolerated to pray without his book before him." With regard to preaching without notes he told of a woman in Philadelphia who refused to hear a certain minister preach because he did not read his sermons. "She seemed to think," said Finney, "it would be profane for a man to go into the pulpit and talk, just as if he was talking to the people about some interesting and important subject."[58] The practice of kneeling for prayer, he indicated, had caused a great disturbance in many parts of the country. "The time has been in the Congregational churches in New England, when a man or woman would be ashamed to be seen kneeling at a prayer meeting, for fear of being taken for a Methodist."[59]

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[56] Finney, Lectures on Revivals of Religion (edition cited), pp. 275-276.

[57] Ibid., p. 254.

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[58] *Ibid.*, p. 257.

[59] *Ibid.*

Doubtless Finney knew that the New England Puritans rejected kneeling because they thought of it as a Roman Catholic perversion that the Anglican Church should have reformed, but he seems rather to have been amused at the possibilities of opposition to kneeling based upon their fear of being associated with the socially inferior Methodists. In a similar jocularity, he defended the practice of laymen praying in public, even in the presence of a minister; and he ridiculed the opposition to lay exhortation. "What! A man that is not a minister, to talk in public! it will create confusion, it will let down the ministry; what will people think of us, ministers, if we allow common men to do the same things that we do? Astonishing!"[60]

Finney was radical in adopting his own preferences in the order of worship. The pragmatic considerations rising out of his singular emphasis upon conversion, and then in a later period upon perfection, definitely led him into a severely truncated view of the design of public worship. Biblical and historical scholarship have rediscovered the liturgical elements imbedded in the Scriptures; but this knowledge was not available to Finney. He read the Bible through the spectacles of his religious milieux. Nevertheless, though radical, he did not go as far as some of his ultraist supporters. For instance, in a letter from Sarah and Angelina Grimke to Theodore Weld we read:

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[60] Ibid., p. 258.

> I have given up going to any place of worship. I have tried all and they are all alike to me places of spiritual famine. My experience is the same in colored, as in white congregations. In consequence I have seriously doubted whether I could innocently attend religious meetings--whether such meetings, or indeed any meeting for worship at all, was ever instituted by God and the more I examine the Bible in reference to this subject, the better satisfied I am that our Father never appointed either under the Jewish or Christian dispensation any thing like the present system of ministry, or worship. I went to meeting among our colored friends, for the same reason thou dost. I wished to cast my lot among them, but I heard what to my understanding was not the gospel and I have felt satisfied nearly all the summer to spend my sabbaths quietly at home.[61]

A much more churchly attitude toward worship was exhibited in the 1850's. Mention has already been made of the liturgical studies of Baird and Hodge. From a long article in the Oberlin Evangelist on the "Forms and Order of Worship," it may be seen that the Oberlin Colony and Church had moved somewhat beyond the earlier Finney style, but still remained within the typical worship patterns of the Evangelical synthesis. The author of this article wrote in his introduction, "We are not disposed to prejudge this question, or treat it otherwise than with seriousness and candor. We regard no

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61. Sarah and Angelina Grimke to Weld, December 17, 1837, Letters of Theodore Dwight Weld, Angelina Grimke Weld, and Sarah Grimke, 1822-1844, edited by Gilbert H. Barnes and Dwight L. Dumond, 2 volumes (New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1934), I, 498.

point as trivial which materially affects the amount of practical interest felt in acts of public worship."[62] Referring to an article in the Independent, the author continued:

> The subject, as thus far discussed, embraces two distinct questions; the first, respecting the posture of the body in the various parts of public worship; the second, the use of the voice by all the people in exercises other than singing--the utterance, in concert, of specific forms of prayer; for example, the Lord's prayer: some form of general confession of sin, and of thanksgiving; a like utterance of the ten commandments, and of a brief confession of faith; responses by the people in set forms, to the pastor; the loud amen in prayer.[63]

The author agreed that the extensively prevalent practice, with regard to bodily posture, should become uniform and universal; namely, "that in praise, people should stand; in prayer, should bow or kneel; during the sermon, the people, hearing and in meditation, should sit."[64] With regard to the use of forms of words and the voice in concert, the author asserted that the congregational mode must be considered the true idea of singing. "Let every body be trained to sing," he wrote, "and all join in this act of worship." Nevertheless, he allowed for an appropriate place for choral music.[65]

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[62] "Forms and Order of Worship," The Oberlin Evangelist, XVII, No. 11 (May 23, 1855), 85.

[63] Ibid.

[64] Ibid.

[65] Ibid.

The author was less agreeable on the question of the use of set forms of words for prayer, confession, thanksgiving, and creeds. He stated that argument must come from two sources: actual experience, and the known laws of the mind. With respect to the first he wrote:

> The argument from experience is apprehended variously, some who have used forms and concert of voice in them, believing them useful; others, and in general, most who have not been accustomed to them, believing them to be barren and unfruitful. On this point we have little to say. The most decisive experience, must be that of those who have used both methods. So far as we know, the strength of this testimony lies against the use of forms.[66]

With respect to the "known laws of the mind," he set forth three which he thought were applicable. First, he stated that "utterance of thought in words deepens the impression on the mind." Audible prayer is more impressive on the mind than silent prayer; and verbal expression of feelings tends to deepen and strengthen those feelings. Upon this law he granted that recitation of set forms of words would be substantiated. Secondly, he stated that "reiterated utterance of the same thoughts in the same words, lessens their impression." And thirdly, he stated that "action of mind begets action." The second law, which is of questionable validity, argued against forms of words in the liturgy. And by the third law he argued that the presence of a mind thinking vigorously, and feeling intensely, enkindles other minds to think and to feel. This he argued was the value of extempore preaching over mere reading, the value of lively conversation, and hence a testimony in favor of extempore prayer by the pastor, and against restricting public prayer to set forms. Here was evidence of the pragmatic note of Evangelical pietism so often heard from Finney, himself. "With all deference to the opinions of others," concluded the author, "we think it the time and the place to say that a wiser effort would lie in the line of enkindling a deeper and purer devotional feeling, and of appreciating more fully the childlike simplicity of faith, and the unfettered utterance of thought and emotion inspired of the Holy Ghost."[67]

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[66] Ibid.

Finney's view of the Church and its worship had its virtues, but it certainly had its infirmities. It was more Petrine than Johannean; rather more like the busy Martha than the thoughtful Mary, sitting at the feet of Jesus. Worship was more of a negotiation with God than a celebration of his given grace; it was more mechanical, and utilitarian in spirit, than liturgical. The plainness, the meagerness of worship--lacking all such symbols as the cross, the baptismal font, the gown, and symbolic architectural design--became a characteristic of American Christianity.[68] It was only in the Sacraments of the Lord's Supper and Baptism that the auditory nature of worship, with its extempore preaching, its free prayer, and singing, was relieved.

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[67] Ibid.

[68] Cf. Philip Schaff, op. cit., p. 95.

It has already been indicated that Puritanism tended toward a Zwinglian view of the Lord's Supper. John Wesley's churchmanship did not save Methodism from similar conclusions, especially as Evangelical revivalism replaced the historic "means of grace" with the "more efficient" means of the anxious bench and the class meeting. Both of these tendencies were operative in Finney's practice, and they cooperated in diminishing the place of the sacraments in the worship of the Church.

In a sermon, "On the Lord's Supper," Finney disclosed his view of the sacrament. He believed that this ordinance of the Church had two great objects: "One, to show the bearings of the death of Christ in its governmental relations, as a substitute for the death of all who else must die; and the other, to show forth the spiritual relation existing between Christ and his people whereby they live by faith on him."[69] He emphasized that this ordinance reminded the worshipper of his sins and their relationship to the death of Christ. Also, he believed that it had another object, "to awaken and quicken our compassion for sinners." This object was accomplished by perceiving the great love Jesus had for his enemies.[70] It also afforded conclusive evidence of the truth of the Christian religion. "No fact of history," he said, "is better attested than that it has existed as far back as the death of the Apostles."[71]

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[69] Finney, "On the Lord's Supper," The Oberlin Evangelist, VIII, No. 7 (April 1, 1863), 49.

In the 1860's it was still necessary for Finney to combat the ultraism of "come-outism," which had been spawned in the Church by his reform and perfectionist emphasis. Therefore, the second division of his sermon dwelt upon what is not implied in an acceptable coming to the Lord's Table. In coming to the Lord's Table, he said, "we do not endorse the piety of all who come with us."[72] "I may believe the church to be a church of Christ, and yet may not have satisfactory evidence of the piety of some of its individual members," he exclaimed. Yet, "if the devil should come, I would come too. Why should I be kept away by him? If he comes, let him bear his own responsibility."[73] This point, however, was made somewhat ambiguous in the light of previous statements concerning the admission of slave-holders to communion, and by the statement on discipline in a later section of the sermon. He said:

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[70] Ibid.

[71] Ibid.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Ibid.

> Every church must maintain wholesome discipline. If they neglect this they ought not to come to the Lord's table at all. They are guilty of greatly dishonoring Christ and his cause. How can it then be any thing else than mockery for them to publish to the world their professions of honoring the Savior, as they do in coming to his table? If I as pastor should find that a church refused to maintain wholesome scriptural discipline, I should feel it my duty to refuse to administer to them this ordinance. I should not make myself accessary to their contempt of the Lord's authority and of the rules of his house.[74]

He emphasized that "stumbling blocks must be removed," that difficulties between brethren should be amicably settled, and that "self-examination," a renewal of one's covenant with Christ, and restitution to neighbor, and to God, should be practiced.[75]

In considering next what things are implied in coming to the Lord's Table acceptably, he emphasized first of all that the communicant should have "a living, efficient faith," as opposed to a faith that is a mere opinion, held in the intelligence, but not affecting the heart or the conduct.[76] Also, he should have sympathy with Christ in his love for his Church, in his compassion for sinners, and a deep regard for the progress of his kingdom upon earth. Of Christ and the Sacrament he said, "It is as if a man were making ready his own winding sheet. He is thinking of a memorial by which his death for them shall be had in perpetual remembrance through their lives and throughout the lives of all that should believe on him through their word down to the end of the world."[77] It is in such a passage as this, in the absence of more definitive statements concerning the nature of Christ's presence in the sacrament, that one sees the Zwinglian tendency of his view.

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[74] Ibid., p. 50.

[75] Ibid.

[76] Ibid., p. 49.

The final division of the sermon dwelt upon the consequences of coming unworthily to the Table. He spoke of "great spiritual blindness," and of reprobation. In the closing remarks, with a great contrast to the harsh consequences just set forth, he disclosed the sentimentality of his view. "This ordinance is peculiarly precious to the saints," he said. "Here they meet Christ under most affecting circumstances. It is as if they were to meet him at his own funeral or at his cross. What can be more precious!"[78] He concluded, "When Christ sees a Church in a suitable state to come acceptably--when he sees the humble, broken heart and the uplifted eye of confidence, trusting in his word and atoning blood, think you not that his heart is affected with tenderest sympathy?"[79]

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[77] Ibid., p. 50.

[78] Ibid., p. 51.

[79] Ibid.

During this "sentimental era," the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper evoked much emotion and sympathy among Evangelical believers, but the joy and thanksgiving of the Eucharist, in the light of the Resurrection, was a little heard note.

It is always difficult to stereotype Finney, and although it has been argued that he was a representative figure of the Evangelical synthesis, it must be granted that he was usually more liberal in his thought than those who followed after him. Take, for instance, the question of using wine at the Communion Table. One would think that Finney, with a view to his stoutly held Temperance views, would come out strongly against the traditional practice. It is somewhat surprising to read:

> I have never apprehended so much evil as some do, from the use of common wine at the communion. I have not felt alarmed at the danger or evil of taking a sip of wine, a teaspoonful or so, once a month, or once in two months, or three months. I do not believe that the disease of intemperance (and intemperance, you know, is in reality a disease of the body) will be either created or continued by so slight a cause. Nor do I believe it is going to injure the Temperance cause so much as some have supposed. And therefore, where a person uses wine as we have been accustomed to do, and is fully persuaded in his own mind, he does not sin.[80]

However, Finney's real point was that he did not believe that the use of wine was in any way essential to the ordinance. He wrote:

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[80] Finney, Lectures to Professing Christians (New York: John S. Taylor, 1837), p. 34.

> Very much has been said and written and printed on the subject, which has darkened counsel by words without knowledge. To my mind there are stronger reasons than I have any where seen exhibited, for supposing that wine is not essential to this ordinance. Great pains has (sic) been taken to prove that our Savior used wine that was unfermented, when he instituted the supper, and which therefore contained no alcohol. Indeed, this has been the point chiefly in debate. But in fact it seems just as irrelevant as it would to discuss the question, whether he used wheat or oaten bread, or whether it was leavened or unleavened. Why do we not hear this question vehemently discussed? Because all regard it as unessential.[81]

In Finney's mind, the matter was settled quite simply. "In order to settle this question about the wine, we should ask what is the meaning of the ordinance of the supper.--What did our Savior design to do? It was to take the two staple articles for the support of life, food and drink, and use them to represent the necessity and virtue of the atonement."[82]

There were other matters, concerning the ordering of the Lord's Supper, that Finney thought to be unessential. Typical of his egalitarian and pietistic beliefs, he added a note in revising his Lectures on Revivals of Religion for publication, which was printed in the text of later editions in parenthesis:

> I have heard of a Church in Pennsylvania, that was formerly flourishing, but neglected revivals, and it became so reduced that the pastor had to send

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[81] Ibid.

[82] Ibid., p. 35.

> to a neighbouring Church for a ruling elder when he administered the Communion. (Why not, in such a case, let any member of the Church, male or female, distribute the elements? Is it indispensable to have an elder?)[83]

In all such matters, Finney adopted the position of a radical anti-formalist. In a typical passage, he wrote: "A _sticklishness about forms_, ceremonies, and non-essentials, gives evidence of a backslidden heart. A loving heart is particular only about the substance and power of religion, and will not stickle about its forms."[84]

For the lack of any contrary evidence, it must be assumed that Finney followed the doctrine of Baptism traditionally held in the Congregational Church. Baptism was understood to be the seal of membership in a divinely appointed fellowship of some covenanted church. This seal was given to a believing adult, or the child of a Christian household, in the presence of the congregation, and not in a private ceremony. The Sacrament of Baptism was usually administered following an exhortation to the congregation, and parents especially, concerning the ordinance; the mode was "washing" or "sprinkling." The pastor offered prayer both before and after the action of baptizing.[85] In the manuscript notebook of Finney's "Lectures on Church Government and Pastoral Theology," he treated Baptism and the Lord's Supper as taking the place of the seals of the old covenant, namely, circumcision and the passover. In the same notes, he argued for infant baptism, and against transubstantiation.[86]

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[83] Finney, _Lectures on Revivals of Religion_ (Westwood, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell Co., n.d.), p. 22. Cpr. the edition usually cited, edited by William G. McLoughlin, p. 28.

[84] This passage appears in the 1868 revision of Lecture XXI, "The Backslider in Heart," _Ibid_., p. 503.

Finney was quite "non-sectarian" in his revival ministry, and genuinely deplored the zeal with which the developing denominations separated themselves from each other. He, like many within the core of the Evangelical synthesis, greatly desired Christian union. It is believed that he wholly subscribed to a discussion in the Oberlin Evangelist upon the subject of "Christian Union" and the ordinances of the Christian Church. The author, probably Henry Cowles, wrote:

> Baptism pledges us in consecration to one common Master. . . . and shall baptism be made an engine for riving the body of Christ asunder? . . . . And will Jesus forget that this is His body--the Church--which is thus mangled, and mangled by means of the very ordinance which he gave to bring all, both Jew and Gentile, bond and free, into one great family of love--nay more into one body?
>
> The ordinance of the supper is a feast of love and union. From time immemorial the act of eating together has been a symbol of friendship, a pledge

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[85] Cf. Williston Walker, A History of the Congregational Churches in the United States (New York: The Christian Literature Co., 1894), p. 243.

[86] Finney, "Lectures on Church Government and Pastoral Theology," (Ms. notes), Finney Papers, OCL, p. 10.

> of mutual fidelity. . . . He would have us come into His presence and around His table, and as we receive the bread and wine, He makes us pledge eternal friendship and love both to Himself and to each other.[87]

3. The Place of Music and Concepts of Architecture

The meager liturgical literature and practice of the American Church has been discussed, and attention is now focused upon the place of music in worship. Among the first generations of the American Puritans, there were various attempts at the versification of psalms and other Scriptural canticles for singing. These, on the whole, were rather rude attempts quite lacking the strength and artistic construction of the German chorale tradition, or the French psalmody. The introduction of Isaac Watts' "Psalms of David, Imitated in the Language of the New Testament" emancipated the Church from its bondage to a dolorous and inferior tradition. After the Revolution, Timothy Dwight completed the work of Watts by versifying a few of the omitted psalms, and added a brief selection of hymns which were in the solemn Scriptural style of Watts and Doddridge. This work was received and adopted by the General Association of Connecticut and the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church.[88] Following this, successive waves of influence came in from England: the hymnody of the Methodist revival, both Wesleyan and Calvinist; the gospel hymns of the Evangelical revival; and the classical hymnody, both ancient and modern, of the Oxford Movement. The early lack of American hymns of quality may be accounted for by the willing acceptance of that flow of hymnody from England. "Only a few writers," says Leonard Bacon, "among them Thomas Hastings and Ray Palmer, have written each a considerable number of hymns that have taken root in the common use of the church. Not a few names besides are associated each with some one or two or three lyrics that have won an enduring place in the affections of Christian worshippers."[89]

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[87] H.[enry] C.[owles], "Christian Union, No. 13," The Oberlin Evangelist, II, No. 13 (June 17, 1840), 101.

[88] Leonard W. Bacon, A History of American Christianity (New York: The Christian Literature Co., 1897), p. 387.

The movement of musical reform initiated by Lowell Mason in Boston and Thomas Hastings in New York resulted in greater simplicity and dignity in Church music of early nineteenth century America. Both of these men published an immense amount of music for the Church; and they were imitated by a countless number of less successful writers and composers. A veritable flood of church-music books washed over the churches, completely modifying the old practices of lining-out the psalms, of depending upon eight or ten tunes for the singing of praise in a congregation, etc. Only a few tunes, chiefly from the pen of Lowell Mason, have taken a permanent place in American hymnology.[90] In New York state, the New England influence counted for much, and hymn-singing societies were organized in the little wooden churches and schoolhouses throughout the western, central, and northern counties. "The local singing society," writes Dixon Ryan Fox, "was a transferred institution as much as the Sunday school, the Bible society, the tract society, the missionary society, the society for ministerial education, or the lyceum."[91]

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[89] Ibid. Attention is called to the fact that Thomas Hastings was associated with the musical program of the Free Churches in New York City, and worked closely with Finney. The "gospel hymns" which became a feature of the revivalistic tradition after the revivals of 1857, in connection with Moody and Sankey, expressed the Evangelical ethos, but were not closely related to Finney's life and thought.

One of these early hymn books was associated with the revivals of Finney; it was the Christian Lyre. Joshua Leavitt was the editor, and in 1830 he wrote to Finney:

> I take the liberty to send you for examination a copy of the Christian Lyre. The design of it you will learn from the preface and cover. It is not intended to supersede, but to aid the use of the Hymn Books in use. It will contain, as far as I can procure them, the favorite tunes and hymns of various denominations; its object being to promote the use of such pieces in all types of Christians, and thus to aid in revivals of religion. I have undertaken it, upon my own responsibility, not because I am qualified, but because, in common with others, I felt the need of such a thing, and no one else appeared to attempt it.

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[90] Cf. Ibid., p. 392.

[91] Dixon Ryan Fox, Yankees and Yorkers (New York: New York University Press, 1940), p. 219.

> If you approve the work, allow me to request of you the favor to aid its circulation; particularly in your own place. If you, or some other friend would raise a few dollars, and procure 50, or 100, of No. 1. and scatter them in your prayer meetings, the work would be introduced at once, and with very little expense. There, by subscribing for a copy or two of the whole volume, you can decide from time to time, on the expediency of procuring other numbers in quantity.[92]

In the preface of the Christian Lyre, an egalitarian note was struck along with the design of the contents for revivals. "Every person conversant with revivals must have observed," the preface begins, "that whenever meetings for prayer and conference assume a special interest, there is a desire to use hymns and music of a different character from those ordinarily heard in the church." This book was presented as "specially adapted to social worship, prayer meetings, and revivals of religion."[93] The preface continued, "As the work is not designed to please scientific musicians, so much as to profit plain Christians, reference is had, chiefly, to the known popularity of what is selected. The tunes are accompanied with only a simple bass, and sometimes not even with that. In a vast multitude of cases, the religious effect of a hymn is heightened by having all sing the air only."[94]

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[92] Joshua Leavitt to Finney, November 15, 1830, Finney Papers, OCL.

[93] Joshua Leavitt, "Preface," The Christian Lyre: Adapted for Use In Families, Prayer Meetings, and Revivals of Religion (New York: Jonathon Leavitt, 1832).

[94] Ibid.

Another feature of this book was the use of patent notes, devised by Andrew Law to facilitate the reading of music, or solmization. Those who could read music would read the printed notes in the usual way, disregarding the forms of the notes. Those who read music according to the sol-fa system were aided by the employment of differently shaped notes to indicate the four syllables, as follows: fa was represented by a triangle, sol by a circle, la by a square, and mi by a diamond. Like the standard notation, the stems and the notes indicated the time-value.

An analysis of the hymns reveals that only twelve of them are contained in the official hymnbooks of the major denominations.[95] As there were 148 hymns in all, some judgment of the quality of selection may be inferred. Most of the others were meretricious in their language, overly sentimental, and set to poor tunes. Three examples will doubtless suffice. Hymn number 3 was entitled, "Hearts of Stone." Here may be seen the revivalist theme in its most tasteless form:

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[95] The twelve hymns included in contemporary collections are: "Alas! and did my Savior bleed?" Isaac Watts, 1707 (p.43); "Blest be the tie that binds," John Fawcett, 1782 (p. 175); "Children of the heavenly king," John Cennick, 1742 (p. 33); "Father of mercies, in thy word," Anne Steele, 1760 (p. 123); "From Greenland's icy mountains," Reginald Heber, 1819 (p. 25); "Hark, my soul--it is the Lord!" William Cowper, 1768 (p. 85); "I'm not ashamed to own my Lord," Moravian Hymn (p. 99); "Jesus, lover of my soul," Charles Wesley, 1740 (p. 67); "O for a closer walk with God," William Cowper, 1772 (p. 59); "O Sacred Head, now wounded," Gerhard's hymn translated by J. W. Alexander (p. 197); "Rock of Ages! Cleft for me," Augustus M. Toplady, 1776 (p. 155); "Hail the blest morn!" Reginald Heber, 1811 (p. 105).

> Hearts of stone, relent, relent,
> Break, by Jesus' cross subdued;
> See his body, mangled--rent,
> Cover'd with a gore of blood:
> Sinful soul, what hast thou done!
> Murder'd God's eternal Son.[96]

Hymn number 137 bore the title, "Sacrament." The meter of this hymn is very awkward, and the text is little more than doggerel:

> Ah! tell us no more,
> The spirit and power
> Of Jesus, our God,
> Is not to be found in this life-giving food.
>
> Did Jesus ordain,
> His supper in vain,
> And furnish a feast
> For none but his earliest servants to taste?
>
> Nay, but this is his will
> (We know it and feel)
> That we should partake
> The banquet, for all he so freely did make.
>
> In rapturous bliss
> He bids us do this;
> The joy it imparts,
> Hath witness'd his glorious design in our hearts.
>
> 'Tis God, we believe,
> Who cannot deceive;
> The witness of God
> Is present, and speaks in the mystical blood.

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[96] "Hearts of Stone," No. 3, The Christian Lyre (1832).

Receiving the bread,
On Jesus we feed;
It doth not appear,
His manner of working, but Jesus is here.[97]

"The Restoration of Man" was set to the tune, Marseilles (sic). Doubtless the Marseillaise was meant. The language throughout was as meretricious as the first stanza:

The host of heaven that throne surrounding
Where everlasting splendors glow,
Mid lyres with ceaseless praise resounding,
Beheld the earth involved in woe.[98]

The purpose of these illustrations is to identify another aspect of the meagerness of the liturgical life of the Evangelical-revivalist churches.

Finney was very cautious about singing, especially in a prayer meeting. "The agonizing spirit of prayer," he said, "does not lead people to sing."[99] He went on to say: "I never knew a singing revival amount to much. Its tendency is to do away all deep feeling. It is true that singing a hymn has sometimes produced a powerful effect upon sinners who are convicted, but in general it is the perfect contrast there is between their feelings and those of the happy souls who sing, that produces the effect."[100] His advice was that hymns should be short, and selected to bring out "something solemn"; "some striking words, such as the Judgment Hymn, and others calculated to produce an effect on sinners; or something that will produce a deep impression on the minds of Christians; but not that joyful kind of singing, that makes every body feel comfortable, and turns off the mind from the object of the prayer meeting."[101]

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[97] "Sacrament," No. 137, The Christian Lyre (1832).

[98] "The Restoration of Man," No. 70, The Christian Lyre (1832).

[99] Finney, Lectures on Revivals of Religion (edition cited), p. 133.

[100] Ibid.

It must be understood, however, that what has been said about The Christian Lyre, and about Finney's advice concerning music in the prayer meeting, does not constitute the whole range of Finney's views. It will be remembered that as a young lawyer he directed the choir in the Adam's Church; and he played the 'cello as well as sang. Always interested in church music, he played a significant part in the introduction and maintenance of the teaching of music in Oberlin.[102] Oberlin became the direct heir of what was known as the New England School of church music through George N. Allen, a student and apostle of Lowell Mason of Boston, the noted composer, educational reformer in the field of music, and the acknowledged leader of the New England School. Allen taught music in Oberlin for over a generation, and distinctly influenced the musical tastes of the colony, the college, and the church. He was noted for his piety, and composed several hymn tunes, the best known of which is Maitland, the tune usually sung with the hymn "Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone." In 1844 he published The Social and Sabbath School Hymn Book, a compilation of hymns much superior to The Christian Lyre. Also associated with the New England School was Thomas Hastings, Finney's friend from Utica, who directed the music at the Broadway Tabernacle. He wrote the music for "Rock of Ages," and like others compiled several important collections of songs; he became associated with Mason in a school for training music teachers in New York.

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[101] Ibid.

[102] Cf. Robert S. Fletcher's judgment on this in his A History of Oberlin College, From Its Foundation Through the Civil War, II (Oberlin: Oberlin College, 1943), 785.

Allen introduced Mason's method, ideas and singing books at Oberlin, and made the classes in vocal music increasingly popular. Between 1839 and 1841 instruction in sacred music was given to more than four hundred students, and a class for the children in Oberlin was also organized. It was George Allen who was for many years the guiding spirit and first chorister of the Oberlin Musical Association, later the Musical Union.[103] Systematic instruction in sacred music, within a period of a few years, completely modified the musical tastes of a large number of the colony, and college community. Finney's own musical tastes were also developed along with those of the community. Regular instruction was supplemented by occasional conventions, at which guest leaders and performers brought new inspiration and higher standards of church music to Oberlin. In 1851 Professor Mason, himself, came to Oberlin and led a convention on an inquiry of "the manner of correctly performing the different styles of Church Music."[104] On other occasions Hastings was the guest. When Allen was appointed Professor of Sacred Music in 1841, the trustees passed a resolution, "Resolved that it is the sense of the trustees in the appointment of Mr. Allen that the style of Sacred Music taught in this Institution be in accordance with what is understood to be the style of the Manhattan Collection or of Thos. Hastings."[105]

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[103] Ibid., p. 787.

The Professor of Sacred Music at Oberlin Institute was more than a college professor, he was a community official. Besides his classes, he was responsible for the music program of the local church, and for presenting public concerts throughout the year. At the end of the 1840's a program of instrumental music, especially piano instruction, was under way; and in the 1850's the Oberlin Musical Association began its oratorio tradition. The way was being prepared for the very distinguished Oberlin Conservatory of Music. It cannot be doubted that the general level of music appreciation was dramatically lifted during these two decades, and the "revival hymn" tradition was largely eclipsed.

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[104] Ibid.

[105] Ibid., p. 788.

A tremendous impulse was given to the appreciation of instrumental music by the building of an organ in the Oberlin meeting house. The Oberlin Evangelist took a cautious view of its first public performance in these words: "This instrument is now in place and gave its first public performance on the evening of the 6th inst[ance], before a crowded audience. It has great compass and power. How much it is to add to the real value of our church music for devotional purposes, we shall all be better prepared to judge after a few months' acquaintance."[106] However, by June of 1855 this fine instrument had won deserved approval.

> Our first brief notice of this instrument reserved our opinion of its practical value towards the purposes of church music until experience should give her testimony.
>
> We are now prepared to say that we regard this organ, in its place, and used judiciously, as a valuable auxiliary to religious worship. It has great compass, admits a wide range of modulation, and holds all its immense resources subject to the will of one man. In this latter respect, it has a great advantage over a large band of performers on small instruments. The melody of its tone is unrivalled. Indeed, it seems to us, in this respect, to leave nothing more to be desired. No instrument can have the power of expression which

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[106] "The Organ in the Oberlin House of Worship," The Oberlin Evangelist, XVII, No. 6 (March 14, 1855), 47.

> God has given to the human voice; but so far as mere melody of sound is concerned, the organ seems to have come as near perfection as it is given mortals to attain.[107]

Music in Oberlin was further enhanced in 1865 with the founding of the Oberlin Conservatory of Music as a separate department of the college. The three founders of the Conservatory were John P. Morgan, George Steele, and Fenelon B. Rice. Morgan and Steele had received their early training at Oberlin, and Rice at the Boston School of Music. All three of them studied at the Leipzig Conservatory, which had been founded in 1843 by Felix Mendelssohn and soon established its reputation as the leading center of musical education in Germany. The historian of Oberlin College wrote, "The tradition of the Oberlin Conservatory of Music thus stems from Mendelssohn's Leipzig Conservatory and from Lowell Mason through George Allen and the Oberlin Department of Music of earlier

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107. "The Organ in Our Church," The Oberlin Evangelist, XVII, No. 12 (June 6, 1855), 95. The contract for the organ may be found in the Autograph Collection, OCL. It shows that the organ was made by A. Andrews, Esq., of Utica, N.Y. The specifications were: two banks of keys, compass from CC to G; compass of Swell, CC to G; compass of pedals CCC to C. The action was extended; double Swell and double shaded. The Great Organ had 12 stops in its registration, the Swell Organ had 10 stops, the Pedals had a double open diapason only. The organ was coupled as follows: Great Organ and Swell unisons, Great Organ and Swell octaves, Pedals and Great Organ, Pedals and Swell. The price of the instrument was $2,200, plus travelling expenses, and regular shop wages of the men employed in putting up the organ.

days."[108] It may be concluded that although the order of worship received less than its deserved attention in Finney's thought and practice, the place of vocal and instrumental music was enlarged in compass to include the growing desire for disciplined excellence in content and performance. The marked change in musical tastes signified a cultural movement that slowly made its way into the liturgical practices of the Church.

Church architecture reflects the conceptions of the nature of the Church and of worship, as well as the skill of the builders and the availability of the materials used. The Puritan and Nonconformist traditions of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries which were transplanted in America have already been discussed. A second source of American religious architecture after the Revolution was revivalism. The pattern of architecture adapted to the concepts of revivalism re-emphasized the auditory nature of worship in a very plain setting. For instance, George Whitefield's Tabernacle in St. Luke's Parish, London, was built in 1753. The name Tabernacle implied the influence of the Old Testament upon Christianity, and suggested a primitive tradition long pre-dating the medieval forms of architecture. The name was frequently used in a derogatory sense of dissenter houses of worship, but its usage developed to indicate a very large auditorium. The architectural form of Whitefield's Tabernacle placed emphasis upon revivalistic preaching by providing a preaching room similar to that of the New England meeting houses, but on a far larger scale and with huge galleries. Donald Drew Egbert writes of Whitefield's Tabernacle:

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[108] Robert S. Fletcher, op. cit., II, 802.

> In contrast to the small meeting houses of New England, this tabernacle held 4,000 people. And where most earlier New England preaching had been based on a primarily intellectual approach to a theologically trained congregation, Whitefield's preaching was intended to have an emotional appeal. Moreover, this appeal was not restricted here to a congregation made up merely of the population of a small village, but was directed to great masses of people from all over a great city. In this case, then, the emphasis was more on the common man, and on arousing him emotionally, not only by means of emotional preaching but also by the wholehearted congregational singing of revival hymns, rather than of Psalms alone, which is so stressed by Methodists to this day.[109]

American revivalism in the nineteenth century continued to express its need for a centralized space for preaching and hymn singing, and this auditory concept of worship coincided with the Roman Revival, a style of architecture which particularly lent itself to producing such a centralized space. The prototype of this architecture was the great circular

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109. Donald Drew Egbert, "Religious Expression in American Architecture," Religious Perspectives in American Culture, edited by James Ward Smith and A. Leland Jamison, Volume II, Religion in American Life (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1961), p. 383.

temple in Rome known as the Pantheon, erected in the second century A.D. under the emperor, Hadrian. Many Protestant denominations and sects made use of the Roman Revival architecture to meet their own specific requirements.[110] The interior of the Broadway Tabernacle built for Finney, as described in words and pictures, indicates that it was such a Roman Revival building. It was constructed in 1835-1836, and Finney was installed as pastor of the Broadway Tabernacle Congregational Church in 1836.[111]

Finney was primarily concerned with the auditory elements of worship, a liturgical point of view enhanced by Wren and acculturated by the Evangelical-revivalist tradition. The Tabernacle apparently achieved a remarkable acoustical fidelity, although it must have had little else to commend it. An interesting reaction to the Tabernacle is that of Richard Hoffman, a famous pianist of the nineteenth century. He said:

> I made my first appearance in New York at a concert given by Burke at the Tabernacle. . . . The Tabernacle was a large building on Broadway and

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110. Ibid., p. 384.

111. Cf. especially the picture facing page 39, in Susan Hayes Ward, The History of the Broadway Tabernacle Church from Its Organization in 1840 to the Close of 1900, Including Factors Influencing Its Formation (New York: The Trow Print, 1901), passim. Also, Leon Nelson Nichols, History of the Broadway Tabernacle of New York City (New Haven, Conn.: The Tuttle, Morehouse & Taylor Co., 1940), passim.

> Leonard Street, used on Sunday for religious services and for all kinds of secular entertainments throughout the week. It was the only large room available for public concerts or meetings except Castle Garden (then used for opera), and its acoustic properties were very good. It was, however, a dismal, badly lighted place and the entrance could only be approached through a long, narrow alley from Broadway. The New York audiences of today would revolt against the inconveniences which were cheerfully endured by their grandparents in 1847. I had been wiser had I taken the Apollo Rooms on Broadway (near Canal Street) which were smaller and more desirably located.[112]

Indeed, it is difficult to know precisely what Finney believed would be a proper style for furnishing a church. He was quite willing to preach to sinners in village church, or country schoolhouse. But, he did not think that rudeness and cheapness were values to be regarded highly. It will be remembered that he questioned Lewis Tappan closely upon the renovation of the Chatham Street Theater to determine if it would be appropriate for a church. On the one hand, then, he criticized the churches for any ambition of display which might stand in the way of a revival. In his 1835 lectures he said:

> You may go and build a splendid new house of worship, and line your seats with damask, put up a costly pulpit, and get a magnificent organ, and every thing of that kind, to make a show and dash, and in that way you may procure a sort of respect for religion among the wicked, but it does no good in reality. It rather does hurt. It misleads them, it carries them farther away from salvation.

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[112] Quoted in Frank Milburn, Jr., "Concert Halls of Yesteryear," Musical America, Vol. LXXVIII, No. 3 (February, 1958), 10-11.

> Look wherever they have surrounded the altar of Christianity with splendor, and you will find that the impression produced is contrary to the true nature of religion.[113]

Yet, on the other hand, he castigated the "pious pretence of Christian economy" which cheapened the amenities of the house of God. In his sermon, "Love of the World," published in 1836 he wrote:

> All those who are more parsimonious in their expenditures for the kingdom of Christ than in their expenditures upon themselves and their families, love the world supremely. There are multitudes of professedly pious people who seem to think it a Christian duty to have every thing connected with the worship and service of God of the cheapest kind, while in their own houses, and about their own persons, and that of their families, they practise upon a very different principle. If a church is to be fitted up, every thing must be done with as little expense as possible. If there are carpets, they must be of the cheapest kind; if there are stoves, or cushions, or lights, or other conveniences, almost any thing will answer, provided it is cheap; things are suffered to be out of order; filth is suffered to accumulate, and the house of God to lie waste; and all this is done under the pious pretence of Christian economy. Many churches in the country have no lamps, and some of them no stoves, and others have the panes of glass broken out; the doors of others are so dilapidated that they will scarcely shut; others have the stoops rotten, and the church either not painted at all, or so faded, that if it was a dwelling house, you would suppose it the abode of a drunkard. Most of the churches in the country have no carpets; and in churches carpets are more needed than in any other house, to prevent the disturbance that always occurs where people are going out and in upon an uncarpeted floor; and in the city there are many who are entirely unwilling to

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[113] Finney, Lectures on Revivals of Religion (edition cited), p. 26.

> be at the expense of fitting up a house of worship as commodiously as they fit up their own dwellings. Now, it is manifest, whatever may be the pretense, and however such things may be baptized by the name of Christian economy, all such conduct has its foundation in the love of the world, and in supreme selfishness. . . . If, therefore, the heart is set supremely upon honouring God with our substance . . . it will be in fitting up places for his worship, and in all those things that are essential to decency, to comfort and enjoyment in his service.[114]

When one compares the statements of Lewis Tappan on this subject, it is possible to suggest that Finney is making an oblique reference to Tappan in the above passage. For Tappan was far more radical than Finney on the subject, as may be judged by previous examples, and the following one taken from his "History of the Free Churches in the City of New-York." This passage was written about the same time as Finney's sermon, and during the time of the building of the Broadway Tabernacle.

> In conclusion, allow me to remark, that there are two peculiarities in the history of our churches that specially need reformation: 1. Expending so much of the Lord's money in enriching and embellishing houses of public worship; and, 2. Neglecting the great body of the community, adults and children. These things can be and should be remedied. When I have seen in some of our churches a communion service of massive plate, splendid chandeliers, and costly architecture and furniture, I have been reminded of the anecdote of Oliver Cromwell on visiting York Minster. In one of the apartments the Protector noticed twelve niches, in which were the statues of the twelve apostles in solid silver. "What have

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[114] Finney, Sermons on Important Subjects, 3rd edition (New York: J. S. Taylor, 1836), pp. 271-272.

> you there?" inquired Cromwell. On being told, he exclaimed, "Take them down, coin them, and let them go about doing good." Is it not true, that the mere interest of the capital at present invested in superfluous architecture and furniture in churches, is greater than the whole annual contribution of the Protestant churches in Christendom for the spread of the gospel? It may not be practicable to take down and coin all these useless investments, and send the proceeds about doing good, but the present generation will be guilty before God, if they do not take heed not to run into such excess of folly, in lavishing upon embellishment funds that should be expended in multiplying churches, and winning souls to Christ.[115]

In any case, the Broadway Tabernacle, in its location and style, did not prove to be suitable. Joseph P. Thompson, the pastor, wrote Finney in 1857: "The Tabernacle is to be demolished on the first of May. It is my earnest wish and that of many of my people that you should preach once more in the building that was erected for you."[116]

In 1841 Finney was both the Professor of Theology at Oberlin College and Pastor of the Congregational Church. The attendance at the regular services had grown until the seating capacity of the Chapel, used in common with the college, would no longer accommodate the congregation. It was decided to build a new church. The Oberlin Evangelist announced:

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115. Lewis Tappan, "History of the Free Churches in the City of New-York," (February 1, 1835), in Andrew Reed and James Matheson, A Narrative of the Visit to the American Churches . . ., 2 volumes (New York: Harper & Bros., 1835), II, 351-352.

116. Joseph P. Thompson to Finney, April 2, 1857, Finney Papers, OCL.

> The congregation worshiping in the Chapel has so increased, that a large number are deprived privileges of the sanctuary a part of each Sabbath. . . . It is to be plain and substantial, but, to meet the increasing wants of the place, must be large. They have therefore agreed to build a house, if possible seventy feet wide by one hundred and ten feet long; with a circular gallery twenty feet wide all round; the stand being towards the center. This will seat comfortably 2500 people, and 800 or 1000 more may get into it.[117]

The minutes of the Sixth Annual Meeting of the General Association of the Western Reserve show that this was a rather large undertaking for the impoverished community. A resolution was passed, "Resolved, That in view of the increasing population both of students and colonists at Oberlin, and of the poverty of both, it be earnestly recommended to the churches connected with this Association to aid the brethren there in the erection of the Meeting House, which they have undertaken to build, and which they greatly need."[118]

The style of the building was a combination of the New England meeting house and the interior circular style of the Broadway Tabernacle. The plans were drawn in Boston for the grand sum of fifty dollars. Finney wrote with enthusiasm from Boston in 1841, "Tell Br. Whipple that Br. ____ has paid

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[117] "Church for Oberlin," The Oberlin Evangelist, III, No. 5 (March 3, 1841), 39.

[118] Congregational Churches of Ohio, "Sixth Annual Meeting," General Association of the Western Reserve, Mss. Records, p. 54, OCL.

50 dollars for a draft of the new church. It is so definite that the shape, size, length, of all the timbers are marked."[119] It was not until 1845, however, that the church was completed; and, according to Wright the seating capacity was more modest than the earlier intention. He wrote, "In 1845, a commodious church building had been erected, after the plan of the original Broadway Tabernacle, seating fifteen hundred."[120] Under the ministry of Finney the church was uniformly filled for all of the services, and as the congregation continued to grow it was necessary to establish a second church in 1859.

During the 1850's the new organ and a growing musical tradition of excellence enhanced the worship services of the Oberlin community, reflecting a general movement in the culture of the Western Reserve. Finney, himself, was a more cultured person by the time he came to Oberlin in 1835, as compared with his earlier frontier days in Western New York. His preaching in the great population centers of America and Great Britain played a part in further refining his tastes and manner. The inexorable forces which mark the sect to church movement were beginning to manifest themselves in the Oberlin of the 1850's, but it was not until after the Civil

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[119] Finney to Henry Cowles, December 23, 1841, Cowles Papers, OCL.

[120] Frederick G. Wright, op. cit., p. 158.

War that a more sophisticated Oberlin presented itself to the world. In the 1850's there was still a popular disapproval of any ambition for display in houses of worship--and, perhaps, rightly so. A long article in the Oberlin Evangelist was very critical of recent descriptions of the fine Presbyterian and Congregational Churches in Cleveland. The author wrote:

> When we read these passages, we paused to think of their spirit and indications. We said to ourself --These churches--their pastors and members--may not sympathize fully in the spirit of their advocate;--perhaps would not endorse his defence. But, on the other hand, this prominent correspondent of a leading religious journal does not speak for himself alone. We wish he did. We should be glad to believe that this spirit of ambition to be the greatest--in expense and display--is confined to his single bosom. But there is too much evidence, showing a wide-spread apostacy from the gospel spirit in this direction.
>
> What is this spirit? Ambition. Display of wealth. Strife for pre-eminence in ornament.
>
> What does it assume? That this pleases God; that it fulfils the mission of Christ's church; that it manifests no other spirit than his. What a mistake!
>
> What standard of excellence for Christ's church is this? Not purity of doctrine; not simplicity or strength of faith; not zeal in saving souls; not self-denial in devoting her wealth, and more still, her educated sons and daughters, to the evangelization of the world; not unblemished morals; not an aggressive influence against popular sins;--not anything, in short, which distinguishes the church from the world;--but just that in which the world joins in the same race for superiority--pre-eminence in taste and display!

> And is it possible, that, in this dawn of the Millenial (sic) age,--the missionary enterprise being now in the full tide of successful experiment, --the strong churches of our land have come to this? Have they so lost the true idea of Christianity?[121]

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[121] "Ambition for Display in Houses of Worship," The Oberlin Evangelist, XVII, No. 7 (March 28, 1855), 54.

VIII. THE CHURCH AND ITS MINISTRY

A. Biographical Excursus

1. From 1835 to 1851

Any treatment of Finney's view of the ministry must include the pattern of his life, as well as of his thought. For, to a marked degree, Finney's theology was informed by his experience. When Finney became the first Professor of Theology at Oberlin Institute in 1835, his theology was in the process of formulation. From 1824 to 1835 he had become one of the world's great evangelists, and the publishing of his *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*, in May of 1835, was a point of transition, at which he attempted to conceptualize a decade of practical experience as a successful itinerant evangelist. Likewise, the publishing of his *Sermons on Various Subjects* in June, or July, of 1835 made his point of view available to a large reading public. When he left New York City in May to take up his work at Oberlin as an educator, it was his chief purpose to train ministers for the revivalist ministry.

Finney continued as pastor of the Chatham Street Church where he preached during the winter months. As has been indicated, he withdrew from the Presbyterian Church on March 2, 1836 to accept the pastorate of the Broadway Tabernacle Church

(Congregational). Here he preached a series of sermons, published in 1836 as Sermons on Important Subjects. It was at this time that he began to pursue his inquiry into the doctrine of perfection, changing his emphasis from preaching for the conversion of sinners to a concern for the entire sanctification of the believers. This inquiry reached a definitive stage in his Lectures to Professing Christians (1837), and Views on Sanctification (1840). On April 6, 1837 he gave up his New York pastorate and became the pastor of the First Congregational Church of Oberlin, which he served until 1872.

For the rest of his life he was associated primarily with Oberlin, although there were some notable preaching missions, including two to Great Britain. At Oberlin he formulated his theology, giving peculiar emphasis to man's natural ability with respect to conversion, to disinterested benevolence which informed the Church as a reform association, and to perfectionism, the entire sanctification of the Church as a holy community. In 1838 he helped to establish the Oberlin Evangelist, which became the chief organ for publicizing the Oberlin theology. In 1840, along with his Views on Sanctification, he published Skeletons of a Course of Theological Lectures, which prepared the way for his two volumes of Lectures on Systematic Theology, first published in 1846-1847.

The intended first volume of this trilogy, on natural theology, was never written; but the two volumes were edited and republished, both in England and in America.[1]

In 1842 Finney returned to Rochester to hold revival services, the scene of his earlier triumph; and then he proceeded to Boston. There, in 1843, he found a portion of the city excited by the preaching of William Miller, who at that time was announcing the fast-approaching end of the world. Finney was urged to controvert Miller's views in public, but he chose to seek a private interview with Miller. Having read Miller's books, Finney attempted to point out the weakness of his arguments. Finney's biographer credits him with partially limiting the lamentable consequences which followed a wide-spread acceptance of Miller's theories.[2] In 1845 Finney published a series of "Letters on Revivals," in the Oberlin Evangelist, in which he attempted to identify some of the errors in revivalism which impinged upon his own ministry, but more particularly upon those who adopted his innovations in an ultraist fashion.

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[1] Finney, Lectures on Systematic Theology, Embracing Moral Government, the Atonement . . . The whole work revised, enlarged, and partly rewritten by the author, during his late visit to England, Edited and revised, with an introduction by the Rev. George Redford (London, W. Tegg and Co., 1851). Also, Lectures on Systematic Theology, Edited by Pres, J. H. Fairchild . . . With a preface by Rev. George Redford (Oberlin: E. J. Goodrich, 1878). The plates of the last edition (1899) were lost for over twenty years, then found and the work was reissued around 1919 by Doran Press of New York. The 1878 edition was republished in 1944 by Colporter Kemp, of South Gate, California, by the photolithographic process.

[2] George F. Wright, Charles Grandison Finney (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1891), p. 267.

Charles Finney was married three times. Lydia Andrews, to whom he was married in 1824, died in December, 1847. Four of their several children survived their father's death in 1875: Charles G., a lawyer in California; Frederick Norton, a prominent promoter of railroad interests in Wisconsin; Helen, the wife of Gen. J. Dolson Cox, of Cincinnati, Ohio; and Julia, the wife of Hon. James Monroe, of Oberlin, Ohio. Though frequently separated for long periods of time during his itinerant evangelistic campaigns, their marriage seems to have been marked by love and understanding. In 1848 he married Mrs. Elizabeth Ford Atkinson, of Rochester, N.Y. In December of 1848, J. H. Fairchild was able to write to James Monroe, "Mr. Finney is as happy as a child with his new wife and Helen thinks there is no woman in the world like her. It suits on every side."[3] She was very helpful to Finney in conducting meetings for women in his later revival labors in England and in Boston. She died in 1863. Rebecca Allen Rayl was his third wife. She had been for some time the assistant principal of the ladies' department at Oberlin. A devoted wife in his later illness, she survived his death, the esteemed companion of his declining years.

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[3] J. H. Fairchild to Monroe, December 4, 1848, Monroe Papers, OCL.

In November of 1849 Charles G. Finney, and Mrs. Finney, arrived in England.[4] Finney's reputation as a revivalist preacher was widespread in England, particularly among the Evangelicals, and his Lectures on Revivals of Religion had been published in an English edition. It had also been translated into Welsh, French, and German. His first preaching in England was done at three small, rather rural, towns, Huntingdon, Houghton, and St. Ives, under the auspices of Independent churchmen.[5] From St. Ives he went to Birmingham and held revival services in the Baptist Ebenezer Chapel, Steelhouse Lane, with the Rev. Mr. Roe. Here he met the Rev. John A. James, who had written the introduction to the English edition of the Lectures on Revivals of Religion. Also, he met the Nonconformist theologian, Dr. George Redford, from Worcester, with whom he next labored, who wrote the preface to the English revised edition of the Lectures on Systematic Theology.

In the spring of 1850 Finney, at Worcester, was in correspondence with John Campbell, pastor of the Tabernacle, Finsbury (Moorfields), London. A letter to Finney from Campbell indicated that careful plans were being laid by both men for Finney's preaching in London in the summer, and again in the autumn. Finney had been careful to inquire about the facilities for publication, and Campbell responded: "As to the matter of publication my own means for this are the most ample, more so than those appertaining to any other Dissenter, but I will endeavour to enlist other journals to cooperate with me."[6] Finney had long ago discovered the value of outreach and publicity acquired through the reporting of his activities in newspapers and journals. Such publicity became the hallmark of the evangelists who followed in Finney's train. In May of 1850 Finney went to London and preached during the summer months at the Tabernacle and the Tottenham Court Road Chapel, both of which were built for Whitefield. In September Charles and Mrs. Finney went to France for a vacation, but returned in October to continue the preaching mission in London. John Campbell's letter of October 10th indicates the nature of the response which supported his invitation to Finney for a return to the Tabernacle: "anything but blind to some of your dear infirmities, they are deeply alive to your virtues, consider that immense good has flowed from your labors, and that it is of the first moment to obtain a 'second benefit' for our Church and congregation, and the East of London. They further stated, that, with scarcely an exception, every soul of their general circles will rejoice in your return."[7]

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[4] An interesting memorandum of this first visit to England is found in "My father's 1st visit to England," Finney Papers, OCL. It gives an outline of places visited, etc. Cf. also, Memoirs.

[5] Especially, Potto Brown and James Harcourt, Ibid.

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[6] John Campbell to Finney, April 16, 1850, Finney Papers, OCL. Campbell was editor of The British Banner, and reported Finney's preaching in London extensively.

There is something peculiarly pertinent in Campbell's statement, "anything but blind to some of your dear infirmities, they are deeply alive to your virtues." Finney's auditors, in almost every case, were aware of a certain strangeness in both the method and the matter of his discourse, yet they were grasped by his proclamation. For example, a correspondent from Ebenezer Chapel in Birmingham, where Mr. Roe was pastor, wrote:

> you will, perhaps ask what is the secret of Mr. Finney's success? What does he more than others! A reply to this inquiry can not be given in a few words. There is an air of solemnity about him which inspires awe, as if he were indeed "sent from God." Every thing about him seems to say "This one thing I do." He has few of the natural attributes of eloquence; his voice is not good: and he has the nasal twang of his countrymen. He does not attempt to be eloquent in the ordinary meaning of that word. His addresses are directed to the conscience through the understanding. He is a most powerful reasoner. By his manner of treating his subject, he gives such a deep insight into the meaning of his text, as must at once convince the most learned and the most ignorant of his hearers. The mysteries of iniquity, the mysteries of redemption, and the mysteries of

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[7] John Campbell to Finney, October 10, 1850, Finney Papers, OCL.

> Providence seem to reveal a new aspect under his penetrating glance, and one can not but see realized in him an interpretation of what was said by the Divine Teacher: "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light."[8]

Likewise, John Campbell was an appreciative critic. On the one hand he applauded the over-all effect of Finney's style: "Few men have," he wrote, "in the same period of time, thrown out upon the world a greater amount of original thought than he has done; and few have expressed themselves in a clearer or finer style of Saxon language."[9] But, on the other hand, he was well-aware of Finney's "dear infirmities." In commenting on Finney's usefulness and orthodoxy, he wrote:

> First, his mind is one of a very metaphysical character, resembling not a little that of the late Dr. M'All, of whom the late venerable Matthew Wilks said, "he was not satisfied with pulling every feather from the wing, but picked every fibre from every feather." His tendency is to push everything far beyond what is common, and, as a rule, beyond what is necessary, and perhaps desirable. The result is, that he often appears to depart from the common path, when in fact he only travels further on in the same direction, which, however, has all the novelty of a deviation to the eye of those accustomed to stop at a nearer point of the horizon. . . . /With a view to his Lectures on Systematic Theology/ But on carefully examining every portion of the text in connection with its context, and one portion of the text in connection with the rest, it will be found thoroughly orthodox: that is, in harmony with the system denominated Modern or Moderate Calvinism, although abounding in the most exceptionable, sometimes the most alarming phraseology.

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[9] "Prof. Finney in England," quoted from The British Banner, The Oberlin Evangelist, XII, No. 11 (May 22, 1850), 83.

> The other peculiarity of Mr. Finney is, that, while trained for law, he took up theology at his own hand; and hence, perhaps, many of his peculiarities of view and of statement, and also most of those things which may be considered excrescences, and which were better away. The case bears very strongly the same marks which, in this country, distinguish all self-taught men of strong and original intellectual powers. They are apt to look upon what is really in their own case a discovery, as something not previously known to mankind, although patent as the path of the ocean before the birth of their remotest ancestors. The late Dr. Adam Clarke was a remarkable instance of this. Such men are in danger sometimes of assuming an air of dogmatism, and of over-estimating the importance of points upon which they differ from the received standards, and carrying themselves as if _they_ were "the people, and wisdom would die" with them. The certain result of such notions, when expressed or published, is opposition, and for the most part controversy, which only tends to enlarge the grounds of the dispute--clothing figures with all the importance of facts, converting words into things, and expressions into principles.[10]

Finney continued to labor at the Tabernacle until he sailed for the United States in April of 1851. Documents from _The British Banner_, at the close of his preaching there, indicated considerable care in judgment and gave a useful assessment of his gifts and theology. Once again Finney was presented as having what must be called _charisma_ in his "oral labors." The extravagance of his dialectics and the peculiarities of his theology seemed to detract little from his power over large congregations of attentive hearers.[11] These

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[10] "British Estimate of Prof. Finney's Usefulness and Orthodoxy," quoted from _The British Banner_, _The Oberlin Evangelist_, XII, No. 22 (October 23, 1850), 171.

[11] It would seem to be too facile an analysis to adopt the approach of William Sargant, who interprets Finney's

/preaching

comments were probably from the pen of John Campbell:

> Now, then, that Mr. Finney's course has reached its close, it may be permitted us to utter a thought or two relative to a man for whom we have conceived a very high regard, and in whose labors and history we feel the deepest interest. Well, we cannot say that we are much gratified at the thought of Mr. Finney's returning to college duties, and the general ministry of rural charge. We do not consider that such is the place for the man; and we must be allowed to think that, fifteen years ago, a mistake was committed when he became located in the midst of academic bowers. In our view, there are few living men to whom such an element is less suited. He is made for the millions--his place is the pulpit, rather than the professor's chair. He is a heaven-born sovereign of the people. The people he loves, and the mass of the people all but idolize him. He seems especially created for oral labour. The structure of his mind is altogether peculiar. The logical faculty is developed in an unusual degree, and hence there is a tendency to argument in excess. He reasons on and on to the extreme of redundancy, often laboring to explain that which requires no further explanation, and needs no further proof. He is, moreover, strongly addicted to the metaphysical and analytical, and hence whatever he touches becomes more or less arrayed in a dialectical costume. These peculiarities might, at first sight, seem somewhat to unfit him for pulpit labor among the million: but it is otherwise; he succeeds either through or in spite of them. Whether he be understood or not, he is listened to, and complaints are not generally heard on the score of his being unintelligible. These rare gifts are of signal service in enabling Mr. Finney to fathom the deepest recesses of the human heart, and to throw light on the darkest portions of human character.

(Cont.) preaching psychologically in terms of "brain washing." Sargant seems to put Finney in the same genus with the snake-handling cults, etc. Cf. William Sargant, Battle for the Mind (Garden City: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1957), pp. 153-158. Finney was a charismatic figure, more cultivated and less primitive than suggested by Sargant.

> Of his theology, after what we have said on former occasions, we need here say nothing beyond re-asserting its radical soundness on all the great points of Evangelicalism. His modes of statement, at times, are not such as a sound, erudite English divine would approve or adopt; he may be occasionally the victim of his own logical subtlety, his statements may sometimes appear to be rash, and his deductions daring, but he always and quickly rights himself, and, with a powerful hand, never fails to vindicate the ways of God to man. On the subject of man's responsibility, he has, in our view, no equal; never was it our lot to see the human spirit so completely divested of every plea, and so shut up to the faith! He may often, with justice, be charged with a limited or defective exhibition of the grace of God. We have heard sermons from him in which the name of Christ was never mentioned, nor his work so much as referred to,--sermons which might have been preached by a Jew or a Turk; but, in setting forth the claims of justice, has no superior and few equals; and, when he does preach the Gospel, it flows like the river of the water of life![12]

2. From 1851 to 1860

Upon his return from England Finney was elected President of Oberlin College. The Oberlin Evangelist announced his acceptance of the office, and indicated that he would continue to instruct his classes in Theology; also, that he had assumed the general supervision of the Department of Mental and Moral Philosophy.[13] As the second president, succeeding

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[12] "Close of Prof. Finney's Labors in London: documents from the British Banner for March 26, and April 2," The Oberlin Evangelist, XIII, No. 11 (May 21, 1851), 81-82.

[13] The Oberlin Evangelist, XIII, No. 19 (September 10, 1851), 149.

Mahan, he served until 1865.

Henry Ward Beecher had reported to the New York Independent in 1850 concerning Finney's revival services at the Tabernacle in London. In an article transcribed by the Oberlin Evangelist he wrote: "On two occasions we were present, when, at the close of the Sabbath evening's service more than a thousand persons presented themselves in an adjoining hall as inquirers. Nor have we ever witnessed in any place, more solemnity, order, and unexceptionable propriety in the conduct of meetings, than has prevailed under Mr. Finney at the Tabernacle."[14] He warned the American newspapers trying to undermine Finney's reputation in England that they were only producing the impression that "revivals of religion are disorders; the channels of mischief and not of blessing."[15] Beecher did not believe that all revivals were spurious, nor did the religious public in mid-nineteenth century America. Further, Beecher did not believe that Finney's revivals were spurious. "We are very far from thinking Mr. Finney a model," he wrote; "or the revivals which sprung up under his labors early in his career to be such in all respects as we should wish to see." "But," he continued, "if the choice were between no revivals at all and such as followed Mr. Finney's labors, we should most gratefully receive such memorable works of grace, even though their imperfections were greater. An imperfect revival is better than a perfect stagnation."[16]

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[14] The Oberlin Evangelist, XII, No. 25 (December 3, 1850), 199.

[15] Ibid.

He concluded:

> Our English brethren ought to understand that the opinions expressed by several religious newspapers on this side are not the opinions of the American church; that there is a large proportion of American Christians, differing from Mr. Finney in his views of Christian perfection, and not ignorant of some evils in his early Revival labors, who, notwithstanding, regard his life to have been an era in the Revival history of America, and his labors, upon the whole, to have been a precious blessing to the cause of God in America. Another generation will sift the chaff from the wheat, and then, we firmly believe, few men will be found to have been a better husbandman than Charles G. Finney! May God long spare his life and increase his usefulness![17]

Such a commendation from so popular a preacher as Henry Ward Beecher had its impact upon American churchmen, and taking note of Finney's more restrained manner, the old criticisms were quieted. In 1851-1852 he was warmly welcomed in Hartford, Connecticut, where he labored in several large churches with the pastoral approbation of Patton, Bushnell, and Hawes. Quoting from the New York Independent for March 11th, the Oberlin Evangelist read:

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[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid.

> The preaching has been practical and doctrinal, and amazingly close, pungent and thorough, tending to "break up the fallow ground." Mr. F. has nothing of the nature of wildfire and fanaticism in his preaching or measures. He addresses himself with remarkable singleness to the intellect, rousing the conscience and pressing the will, but appealing scarcely at all to the sensibility. Not a few heard him at first with little or no interest, owing to the length of his discourses, the lack of polish in his style, the colloquiality of his preaching, which is extemporaneous, and the somewhat dry manner in which he commences and often continues for the first half-hour; but in proportion as they repeated their attendance were they favorably impressed, and particularly so, when their minds were aroused to consider simply the truth which was uttered, and which was brought forth with a clearness and cogency seldom equaled, and an instructiveness to clergy and laity which will not soon be forgotten.
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> With reference to results, I would first allude, with gratitude to God, to the union and fellowship which has been to a good degree restored among the ministers and churches which have engaged in the work. If nothing else had been accomplished, this would alone repay the outlay of time and power.[18]

A point of maturation in the revival ministry of Finney, and in the American Church, was reached in 1851 as he applied the more restrained manner he had used with success in England. A much less controversial figure, then, his revival ministry kept alive the tradition of revivals from the Second Awakening until the Great Prayer Meeting Revival of 1857 swept the country. It became possible to construe revivals in terms of the unity of the Church, rather than in terms of disruption.

Stirrings of this new era of revivals were a mere flutter in 1856, but the new experience of unity and the practice of daily prayer meetings were a part of Finney's ministry in Rochester in 1856. The Oberlin Evangelist reported:

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[18] "The Revival in Hartford, Connecticut," The Oberlin Evangelist, XIV, No. 7 (March 31, 1852), 51.

> Rev. Charles G. Finney is now laboring in the Brick and Washington st. churches of this city, (Rochester) alternately from day to day during the week. The truth presented has no apparent reference to doctrinal differences, but has aimed thus far at elevating the standard of professed Christians in holy living. The daily prayer-meetings are largely attended by members of nearly all our churches, and are manifestly blessed with that presence and power of the Holy Spirit without which nothing can be done, but with which all christian hearts are sure to unite as one, and sinners be brought to Christ. The work is yet mostly confined to church members, though some of the impenitent have already been led as we hope to consecrate themselves to God.[19]

This is another instance, along with that of the Hartford mission just mentioned, which points to the general assimilation of the Protestant churches into an Evangelical synthesis, during the 1850's, which was to nurture the revivals of 1857-1858 and mark indelibly the development of American Protestantism. The denominational structures became more distinctive during this period, but the religion of the greater mass of the people was informed, then and now, by an Evangelical-pietist-revivalistic synthesis of doctrine and practice.

Finney's influence was not widely felt, or sought after, during the Great Prayer Meeting Revival of 1857; but his meetings in Boston and Providence at this time were deeply appreciated by those directly under his ministry. The pastor of the Park Street Church, A. S. Stone, remarked concerning Finney's ministry in Boston: "My Dear Brother--My personal indebtedness to you is beyond all compass of expression--for good to my own soul--for more certain and copious views of the sufficiency of Christ for my soul's need--and for wise suggestions as to the way to preach Christ to my dying fellow men."[20] Indeed, Finney taught many a new way to preach.

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[19] "From the Genessee Evangelist," The Oberlin Evangelist, XVIII, No. 3 (January 30, 1856), 23.

In 1858 Finney gave up the chair of Systematic Theology as he prepared for his second trip to England. He was, however, to continue his lecturing in Pastoral Theology upon his return. He left Oberlin on December 15th to take passage for England. Announcing his departure, the Oberlin Evangelist remarked, "He goes in the hope that his preaching and evangelical labors there may promote revivals of religion."[21] It also announced that Professor Morgan was to act as pastor of the First Congregational Church, during Finney's absence, and that J. H. Fairchild had been appointed Associate Professor of Systematic Theology. Thus the church and the college undertook steps to carry on when Finney left. The Evangelist was anxious to assure its reading public that the theological department was to continue fulfilling its design, as it concluded: "It is expected that Pres. Finney will give to the Seminary during the ensuing year about the same amount of time and labor as in former years. Thus his visit to England, it is hoped, may be beneficial to this Institution in some respects, and in none, injurious. Vigorous measures are being taken to secure funds for the adequate and permanent support of this Department."[22]

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[20] A. S. Stone to Finney, November 27, 1858, Finney Papers, OCL.

[21] "Oberlin Theological Department," The Oberlin Evangelist, XX, No. 26 (December 22, 1858), 207.

Another aspect of the preparation for this second trip to England was the acquisition of "letters of recommendation" from leading clergymen of the day. Finney's name was not before the public as frequently as it had been in past years, and such letters assured the clergymen of England that he was respected by his brethren in America and properly commended to them. Two letters are quoted here because of their significant witness to Finney's status in 1858. The first letter is from Horace Bushnell, pastor of the North Congregational Church in Hartford.

> As my friend and brother Rev. C. G. Finney proposes to visit England, it gives me great pleasure to commend him to the Christian confidence of ministers and preachers. His character is absolute honesty and simplicity. He is a man of apo-

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[22] Ibid.

> stolic experience and no fanatic. Whatever may be thought of his preaching at the first, as respects manner and form, it is almost certain, at last, to work a great transforming power. It works through principles and connections and never through any furies of passion, and the results accomplished have accordingly a remarkably steadfast and abiding character.
>
> Mrs. Finney his wife is a lady of genuine dignity and refinement. She fastens the respect of all who know her; laboring efficiently with him in spheres appropriate to a chiristian woman, and in no others.
>
> The institution and community of Oberlin of which Mr. Finney is the Head encountered much odium at the first, on the score of certain peculiarities, but is getting to be generally acknowledged as the most steadily and powerfully Christian of any in our whole country. It is working an influence on our Great West of inestimable value.[23]

The second letter is from James B. Shaw, pastor of the Brick Church, Rochester, New York:

> The Rev. C. G. Finney has labored more in Rochester than in any other place, Oberlin excepted, and here in the Brick Church, of which I have been the Pastor the last 18 years, than in any other church. His preaching has been plain, pungent, powerful and searching beyond any that I have heard. It has reclaimed the backslider, confirmed the wavering, and brought a multitude to Christ, among whom are the most influential laymen, that we have. Having learned that he is about to visit the churches of England again, it gives me sincere pleasure to make this statement and also to add that his personal intercourse with me, has been most fraternal, conciliating and Christ-like, not one jarring word has ever passed between us. May the Lord guide him

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[23] Horace Bushnell for Finney, November 26, 1858, Finney Papers, OCL.

> in safety into his desired haven and bless him in the days to come as in the days gone.[24]

In a postscript, Shaw wrote, "I have spoken above of the good results which followed Mr. Finney's labors, the evil consequences I have yet to discover." The distinct impression was given in these letters, as in other communications, that Finney was no longer a bone of contention among the churches and clergy at the end of the 1850's.

In January of 1858 Finney was preaching for revival of religion in Houghton and St. Ives, communities that he had visited during his first mission to England. A number of interesting invitations came to him, most of them expressing an interest in the subject of "American Revivals," and hoping that Finney might bring such a renewal into their midst. John Keed wrote from Zion House, Cambridge, concerning the work in his Baptist congregation in Barnwell:

> Cambridge is of itself a place of importance. The influence of our Principles powerfully operate here, and an open door for usefulness is found. We have some Influential Religious Communities. My own place, "The Baptist interest in Barnwell" is in a very interesting state. A steady and growing Religious Awakening has been realized this last year, and we have had by various means an addition to the Church of sixty members.[25]

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[24] James B. Shaw to Finney, December, 1858, Finney Papers, OCL.

[25] John Keed to Finney, January 18, 1859, Finney Papers, OCL.

Keed mentioned that there was, in Cambridge, "a very interesting Society, The Young Men's Christian Association." Also, he said, "The Subject of 'American Revivals' has recently been brought before the 'Influential' in the Established Church and we feel that a visit from you would be attended with efficient results."[26]

A similar communication came from a pastor, B. O. Bendall, and others, from Stamford. In this case Finney had apparently expressed an interest in accepting an invitation, but there is no record of his visit to Barnwell or Stamford. Bendall wrote:

> We have heard with joy and thanksgiving, of the Religious revival which has taken place among the Churches in America, and it has been our earnest desire and prayer that the Churches in Britain may experience such a time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. We therefore deeply sympathise with the design of your visit to our native land, and implore that you may be blessed and prospered in your endeavour to rouse our Country to the claims of spiritual religion.
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> We have heard with much gratification of the interest you have expressed as to the cause of Christ in Stamford, and of the probability that you will visit us. As you have not yet decided upon doing so, we take this means of insuring and hastening your favourable decision, expressing our very earnest request that you will come, and assuring you of our determination to do all in our power to promote your usefulness and to sustain your efforts, by our attendance.[27]

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[26] Ibid.

[27] B. O. Bendall, and others, to Finney, January 24, 1859, Finney Papers, OCL.

Finney went from St. Ives to London, where he preached at the Borough Road Chapel, and then to Huntingdon. From there he returned to London where he preached in a number of Methodist chapels for several weeks; also, he preached at the Spitalfields Church built by the Huguenots.[28]

In August of 1859 Finney went to Edinburgh, Scotland, where he was associated with Dr. Kirk of the "Evangelical Union." The Oberlin Evangelist reported:

> The Christian News, the organ of the Evangelical Union, of Scotland, contains an account of the labors of Mr. Finney in Edinburgh, in connection chiefly with the congregation of Rev. John Kirk. The attendance at his week evening meeting, is from 400 to 450, and on Sabbath, from 1,200 to 1,800. It would seem from all accounts that the orthodox bodies stand rather shy of Professor Finney and his lady. Few or no invitations are given by the other sects, and thus he is becoming identified in his labors, doctrines, and methods of instruction with the "Morrison" body.[29]

From Edinburgh he went to Aberdeen, and from Aberdeen to Bolton.

Finney was at Bolton during the Christmas season, in

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[28] Cf. "My Father's 2nd visit to England," Finney Papers, OCL.

[29] "Professor Finney," The Oberlin Evangelist, Vol. 22, No. 1 (January 5, 1860), 3. Cf. also, "Mr. Finney in Scotland," from the Glasgow Christian News, The Oberlin Evangelist, Vol. 21, No. 26 (December 21, 1859), 201. In this long article the general movement of revivals in Scotland was discussed. Finney's visit was hailed as a great event "at the present crisis," and his "one unbroken chain of real revival success for the last forty years" was set forth as his true qualification for undertaking labors in Scotland. His preaching and method were set forth with complete approbation.

1859, where he preached for Mr. Robison, an Independent (Congregational) pastor.[30] There was a revival of religious interest in Bolton, under Finney's ministry, and a local report of that revival depicted his manner and force in typical terms. A transcription from the Bolton Chronicle for March, 1860, read:

> The Rev. C. G. Finney, by whom these services are conducted, is a Theological Professor of Oberlin College, Ohio, United States. He is close upon 70 years of age, though, in appearance, he would pass for a much younger man. His figure is tall and commanding; the lines of the face give it an aspect bordering on the severe; the eyes are deeply set, and their glance penetrating: indeed, the entire contour of the well-set head impresses the beholder with the idea of intellectual power, and at once ensures respect. The style of address is singularly direct. There is a total absence of display, and a complete forgetfulness, on most occasions at least, of the graces of elocution. The preacher's aim evidently is to interest his hearers, and to this everything is subordinate. There is a most rigid exactness of statement, the severest simplicity, the closest reasoning, and the discourse proceeds step by step, the judgment of the hearer forced along with it until the end. Having succeeded in this, the preacher appeals to his hearers at once to permit the practical power of this conviction. In doing this he allows the play of his imagination and the force of his sympathy to come to his aid; and description, recital of fact, and the most earnest persuasion are brought to bear upon the hearer to secure his instant submission to the truth.
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> . . . .
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> Another significant feature we must not omit to notice, and that is the union of Christians of every denomination in it. Episcopalians and Nonconformists,

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[30] Cf. "My Father's 2nd visit to England," Finney Papers, OCL.

> belonging to every branch of the Evangelical Church, meet on common ground, and blend together their sympathies, prayers and efforts on behalf of the moral and spiritual elevation of their fellow-townsmen. Minor differences are for the time entirely lost to view, and men who have never supposed before that they could work together, now find themselves without a semblance of difference, heartily engaged in a common cause, and in every practical respect one. While many laymen connected with the Established Church acknowledge the movement and take part in it, one of the clergy, of high standing in the town, has personally attended the services; others have expressed their good wishes for its continued success. And surely, if good can be accomplished through efforts such as these . . . ought they not to receive the sanction and earnest cooperation of all.[31]

Bolton was near to Manchester, and it was there that Finney went in April, 1860; he remained there until August.[32] In August of 1860 he sailed for the United States to endure the grueling years of the Civil War among his countrymen.

3. From 1860 to 1875

Finney's return to Oberlin was a welcome event, for even in his sixty-ninth year he remained the inspirer and ideal figure of the Oberlin church and college. Most of the students came to Oberlin with the hope that they might sit under the instruction of Finney, but he was so frequently absent that the student enrolled in the three year Theological

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[31] "The Revival in Bolton," from the Bolton Chronicle, March, 1860, The Oberlin Evangelist, Vol. 22, No. 8 (April 11, 1860), 59.

[32] Cf. Finney, Memoirs, passim.

Course was fortunate to have a semester's work with him. Surely Finney's faculty colleagues welcomed his return, for they were constantly burdened with the routine work of running the department and teaching the courses which otherwise belonged to Finney. It is a fact that Finney was more of a figurehead than president of the institution: both on account of his frequent and extended absences, and because of his distaste for administrative detail.[33] But none doubted the decisive impact that Finney had upon the development of the colony, the church, and the college. The regard for Finney was truly represented in a letter to James Monroe, informing him of Finney's poor health. William Johnson wrote from Oberlin: "You probably know of Mr. Finney's poor health; it is feared that he will soon permanently fail. How great a loss to our community to loose so earnest a watchman from the walls of Zion in our midst but that is the fate of all mortality change (sic)."[34]

In 1863 Finney's health was greatly improved, and he was able to increase his teaching schedule.[35] Also, he was able to overcome the loss of the second Mrs. Finney in 1864. "The death of poor Mrs. Finney has not prostrated the President," wrote Hamilton Hill to Monroe. "A lady said in the hearing of an aged member of the Board of Trustees the other day, in reference to Mr. Finney's recent loss, 'Poor man, I suppose he is very much cast down.' 'No,' said the octogenarian, 'He is very much cast up.' I have noticed nothing particular in Mr. Finney one way or the other."[36] However, it was then anticipated that Finney would soon give up his office as President. F. D. Parish, a member of the Board of Trustees, indicated to James Monroe, then on a diplomatic mission to Rio de Janeiro, that many were anxious to have him back in Oberlin, and that his name had been mentioned for president with wide approval. He concluded: "Brother Finney is advanced in years and the pastorate and Theology is as much as he can well attend to. Besides, he never was fitted for the Presidency. I believe he will cheerfully acquiesce in the change; and it is believed that all the members of the faculty will heartily approve the measure."[37]

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[33] Robert S. Fletcher, A History of Oberlin College, From Its Foundation Through the Civil War (Oberlin: Oberlin College, 1943), II, 734.

[34] Wm. Johnson to Monroe, January 16, 1861, Monroe Papers, OCL.

[35] J. H. Fairchild to Monroe, September 18, 1863, Monroe Papers, OCL.

From the 1830's onward Finney preached that slavery was sin, and the antislavery impulse of his revivals became a notable effect of the era. However, as has been indicated, he was more moderate in his presentation of abolitionism than Weld, or Lewis Tappan, Garrison, and others. When the Civil War came, he was completely drawn to the radical wing of the Republican party, even to the extent of repudiating Lincoln's cautious policy on the slavery issue. The historian of Oberlin College has indicated that in 1862 one of the young ladies' literary societies debated the question: "Resolved that Pres. Lincoln is not so bad a man as Pres. Finney thinks he is."[38] Finney was among those, in 1864, who agitated for a more radical policy in prosecuting the war, and hoped that the Republican party would nominate a less conservative man than Lincoln. Finney saw the war in cosmic terms; in a letter he wrote: "In this collision the cause of the slave is that of humanity, of liberty, of civilization, of Christianity. It is the cause of God against Satan, & woe to the power that attempts to longer crush labor under the heel of capital."[39]

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[36] Hamilton Hill to Monroe, February 2, 1864, Monroe Papers, OCL.

[37] F. D. Parish to Monroe, September 7, 1864, Monroe Papers, OCL.

When the end of the war came, nowhere were more jubilant and thankful exercises held than at Oberlin. But the jubilation soon gave way to mourning and suspicion upon receiving the news of President Lincoln's assassination. On the Easter

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[38] Robert S. Fletcher, op. cit., II, 879.

[39] Finney to Barlow, February 13, 1863, Finney Papers, OCL.

Sunday, Fletcher notes that Finney preached two sermons, morning and afternoon, in which he called for the vengeance of the Lord and the Nation upon the South. He claimed that too much forbearance had been shown, and exclaimed: "We must show the world that rebellion is a fearful, terrible thing. The President was an amiable man, tender, kind-hearted, but perhaps he stood in God's way of dealing with the Rebels just as they ought to be dealt with for the good of the nation, and for the good of humanity."[40] That Finney continued his radical views in these matters may be judged by Finney's attitude towards Lincoln's successor, who attempted measures in the South which brought him into disfavor with the North. Finney is said to have prayed: "And now, Lord, we pray thee for Andrew Johnson. Wilt thou show him that he is only a man, and after all a very poor specimen of a man. But if he persists in misapprehending himself, then wilt thou put him to bed. Put a hook in his nose and keep him from doing this mischief."[41]

Advanced age and declining health took away the energies of Finney, and he was forced to drop his responsibilities at Oberlin one by one. In 1858 he had discontinued his teaching

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40. Quoted in Robert S. Fletcher, op. cit., II, 883.

41. Quoted in Frank Grenville Beardsley, A Mighty Winner of Souls, Charles G. Finney; A Study in Evangelism (New York: American Tract Society, 1937), p. 178.

of Systematic Theology, and in 1865 he submitted his resignation from the presidency of the college. Finney received a letter from the Board of Trustees in August of 1865 informing him of their acceptance of his resignation. They did not neglect to express "their deep sense of the value of [his] influence and labors in the Institution." They wrote: "Permit us to say then that we esteem your connection with the Institution as the main earthly source of its popular power and spiritual influence. You came to it in the day of small things. You have stood by it in the days of trial and adversity. You have lived to see it prospered, honored and useful."[42] Finney continued his pastorate until 1872, and gave his lectures on Pastoral Theology to the theological students until the very year of his death in 1875.[43] James H. Fairchild was elected to succeed Finney, and of these two men it was said in 1867: "The venerable Pres. Finney continues to be the livist man in our pulpit and really he is quite beyond his peers in the great place he fills. Pres. Fairchild grows fat and slick in his present position and adorns it as all other places most gracefully."[44]

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[42] 42. John Keep, M. E. Strieby, J. A. Thome to Finney, August 21, 1865, Finney Papers, OCL.

[43] 43. The members of the First Congregational Church of Oberlin sent a tender letter of affection to Finney in the acceptance of his resignation as pastor. In part, it read: "In sundering this connexion of more than thirty-five years standing, our hearts are filled with emotions of deep gratitude and love in view of the spiritual blessings we have received under your ministry, and it is with sadness that we yield to the necessity of calling another pastor." The letter continued to speak of his "consistent and blameless Christian life," his "tender sympathy with every individual," his "ceaseless, zealous and effective efforts for the salvation of sinners." It did not neglect to thank him for his "fervid and pungent sermons, wrought through much believing prayer and faithful, intelligent study of God's word." and for his "labors and prayers for the church universal." The desire was expressed that he should continue in their fellowship, and receive the blessing of God. C. H. Churchill (chairman of the committee) to Finney, May 10, 1872, Finney Papers, OCL.

In 1868 Finney completed the manuscript of his memoirs, which were published posthumously in 1876. In 1869 he published his work on The Character, Claims, and Practical Workings of Freemasonry. Finney took a strong stand against this organization and was precipitated into the very storm-center of the debate. How much he was involved in this question may be judged by the immense amount of correspondence which came to him on the subject after 1865. Charles G. Finney died in Oberlin, August 16, 1875, and with him passed an era of reform and revival in American church history. In addition to the Memoirs (New York, 1876), Sermons on Gospel Themes (Oberlin, 1876) and Sermons on the Way of Salvation (Oberlin, 1891) were published posthumously.

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[44] Samuel Plumb to Monroe, December 12, 1867, Monroe Papers, OCL.

B. Pastoral Theology

1. The Evangelical Synthesis and the Ministry

The doctrine of the ministry is an essential part of the doctrine of the Church in the main stream of Reformed theology. Although there was a difference among Reformation theologians concerning some details, there was a surprising agreement among them on the main outline of the doctrine of the ministry. John T. McNeill has shown that they presented a body of doctrine which was both consistent and explicit.[45] It followed from the nature of the Church, in the Reformed view, that certain persons must be vested with the responsibility of maintaining the means of grace. The Word must be preached in purity, the sacraments must be rightly administered, and proper discipline must be duly exercised, for these are the "notes" of the true Church. But the ministry, for the Reformed doctors, was more than this necessity in the economy of the Church; there was a principle of authority beyond mere prudence and expediency. Without exception, they understood that the ministry was a gift of God to the catholic visible Church.[46] Furthermore, there was broad agreement that certain special offices of the ministry were divinely appointed in the Scriptures. As is well-known, Calvin emphasized the offices of the pastor, the teacher, the elder and the deacon. This was the view of the ministry that informed the principal early tradition in America.

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[45] John T. McNeill, "The Doctrine of the Ministry in Reformed Theology," Church History, XII, No. 2 (June, 1943), 77-97.

[46] Ibid., p. 78.

The call to the ministry has been recognized, generally in an implicit manner, as including four elements. First, there is the call to be a Christian, which is the call to repentance and faith in the discipleship of Jesus Christ. Second, there is the secret call, the inner experience of summons to undertake the gospel ministry as vocation. Third, there is the providential call, which is the invitation and command to become a minister realized through the gifts given to a person fitting him for the proper exercise of that office. Fourth, there must be the ecclesiastical call, the summons extended to a man by some community of the Church to engage in the work of the ministry.[47] It is understood that these elements were variously weighted in the unfolding of the American Evangelical pattern of the ministry.

Connected with the ecclesiastical call was the question of ministerial training. How should a learned ministry be maintained? It need only be mentioned that America's earliest colleges were the fruition of aspirations for an educated ministry, for this fact is a commonplace of American history. Perhaps what is less well-known is the nature and extent of that ministerial training. Early in the eighteenth century, it was the custom at Harvard and Yale, for instance, for young students interested in preparing for the ministry to remain at their college as resident graduates to pursue the study of theology. The Professor of Divinity instructed these theological students in their professional studies by delivering a course of sermons on doctrinal theology, usually on a Sunday afternoon. These sermons were for the entire student body, but were prepared to be of special value to those preparing for the ministry. Also, the statutes provided that the Professor of Divinity should give lectures and private instruction to those resident graduates in order to promote their religious interests and learning. There was usually a course of lectures, one each week, on some theological topic; and it was expected that these students would make extensive use of the library in the pursuit of special studies. The influence of the tradition of the English universities is clearly seen in this type of post-graduate theological training.[48]

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[47] H. Richard Niebuhr, The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry; Reflections on the Aims of Theological Education (New York: Harper & Bros., 1956), p. 64.

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[48] Cf. Samuel Simpson, "Early Ministerial Training in America," Papers of the American Society of Church History, Second Series, II, No. 2 (June, 1914), 124-125.

Timothy Dwight was one who served with particular distinction as divinity professor at Yale, also as President of the College. He numbered among his pupils those future leaders of religious thought: Moses Stuart, Lyman Beecher, and Nathaniel W. Taylor. Beecher and Taylor, as has been shown, had theological contacts with Finney. At the time of the death of President Dwight, in the second decade of the nineteenth century, a new era in theological education was beginning with the organization of distinct departments and separate schools of theology. The Dutch Reformed Seminary at New Brunswick, New Jersey, the Associate Presbyterian Theological Seminary at Service, Pennsylvania, and the Princeton Theological Seminary of the Presbyterian Church were the earliest examples of the latter.

Toward the middle of the eighteenth century another type of ministerial training was established. This was the custom of having ministerial candidates in residence at the home of pastors for the purpose of studying theology under their direction. This practice came about gradually, and the first New England pastor to accept ministerial candidates under this system, in considerable numbers, was Joseph Bellamy, of Bethlehem, Connecticut.[49] He prescribed a course of reading for his students, then required them to write papers on various subjects which they had studied. Finally, he required them to write sermons on the most important points of doctrine, and on those practical topics which engaged their interest. In a similar way were many educated at Northampton, under Jonathan Edwards; among them Samuel Hopkins, as has been indicated. Hopkins, himself, while the pastor at Newport was greatly respected as a theological instructor. Nathaniel Emmons, of Franklin, Massachusetts, also had a famous private theological school where he educated about one hundred candidates for the ministry.[50] Meantime, the program of theological instruction at Harvard and Yale continued, and was taken up in a similar manner at Dartmouth, Williams, Bowdoin, and Brown.

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[49] *Ibid.*, p. 126.

Essentially the same methods of ministerial training were carried on by the Presbyterians. Tennent and Blair were to Presbyterian Pennsylvania and New Jersey what Bellamy, Emmons, and others, were to Congregational New England.[51] President Witherspoon of Princeton rendered a similar service, in the training of young men for the ministry, as did President Dwight of Yale. In the Presbyterian Church, however, an additional step was taken. Whereas in the Congregational

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[50] Ibid., p. 128.

[51] Ibid.

Church private instructors in theology were self-appointed, in the Presbyterian Church the presbytery exercised authority by designating those it considered fitted to furnish such instruction. A ministerial candidate was assigned to such a pastor for his studies in theology. It will be remembered that Finney refused to accept presbytery's wish that he should go to Princeton Seminary, and he was assigned to Gale for theological instruction.

These views and practices concerning the ministry were modified, in the early nineteenth century, by new attitudes which altered the earlier traditions and took the shape of what has been called in this thesis the Evangelical synthesis. The chief characteristics of this synthesis, with respect to the ministry, were the products of both theological and non-theological factors. On the theological side, the inherited Calvinism was altered by Arminian influences which were displayed in the practical theology of the revivalists of the Second Awakening, and in the systematic theology of New School divines. New measures in revivalism stressed the emotional and volitional response in conversion awakened by the fervid preaching of the evangelist. The pastoral role was overshadowed by the role of the evangelist, and with this shift in emphasis there was a distinct tendency toward a more instrumental view of the ministry, which in turn was marked by a de-emphasis upon the intellectual leadership of the clergy.

This instrumental view of the ministry focused upon two primary objectives: revivalism, with pastoral care of the new converts, and universal reform, operative through the benevolent societies. The ministry, in this Evangelical perspective, was measured and evaluated in terms of its specific achievements in the realms of revivals and reforms. Such an instrumental view of the ministry so altered the shape of the earlier tradition that it may be argued that it broke with it altogether.

With the downfall of church establishment there was the rise of the concept of the Church as a voluntary association, in which the ministry was shorn of all but its persuasive power.[52] Concurrently, there was a rise in what Mead has called "localism," the tendency to dispute any uniformity imposed from above in favor of local, or radical congregational control.[53] In this situation there was the assertion of lay influence in all ecclesiastical and religious matters, so that the ministers were made even more dependent upon persuasion and political sagacity in ecclesiastical affairs. This "localism" was clearly seen in the operations of the Plan of

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[52] Cf. Sidney E. Mead, "The Rise of the Evangelical Conception of the Ministry in America (1607-1850)," Chapter VIII in The Ministry in Historical Perspectives, Edited by H. Richard Niebuhr and Daniel D. Williams (New York: Harper & Bros., 1956), p. 215.

[53] Ibid., p. 217.

Union, and the development of affinity presbyteries in the Presbyterian Church. Another aspect of this Evangelical pattern was the fact that after 1800 ministers tended to be recruited from a lower socio-economic stratum, thus giving rise to the familiar phrase used to indicate the young ministerial candidate, "pious, but indigent." It is apparent that the Church and ministry were open to the same cultural forces that were shaping the society of this period as a whole.[54]

2. The Training of the Ministry

The nature of Finney's call and training for the ministry has been discussed in previous sections of this thesis. Here it is proposed to identify his views and attitudes toward the ministry, especially with regard to ministerial education, with the prevailing views of the Evangelical synthesis. Consistent with Evangelical revivalism, Finney conceived the end of the ministry to be the conversion of sinners. Summing up his own experience as the foremost revivalist of his day, Finney exclaimed in his Lectures on Revivals of Religion: "The end of the ministry is the salvation of the soul. When we consider the importance of the end, and the difficulties of the work, who will not say with the apostle:

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[54] Cf. "The Social, Intellectual, and Religious Background of an Awakened Church," Appendix, *passim*.

'Who is sufficient for these things?'"[55] It has been shown that Finney enlarged this purpose of the ministry to include the perfecting of professors of religion, that they might achieve entire and permanent sanctification. Between 1835, the publication date of the Lectures on Revivals of Religion, and 1840, the publication date of his Views of Sanctification, there emerged these two essential goals of the ministry.

Indeed, "Who is sufficient for these things?" But, it was Finney's belief that "a wise minister will be successful."[56] He believed that the minister "must understand how to wake up the church, and get them out of the way of the conversion of sinners"; and that he must know "how to set the church to work, when they are awake."[57] This awakening of the Church, and putting it to work, had to do not only with the conversion of sinners and their sanctification, but also with universal reform; for, in consideration of the doctrine of disinterested benevolence, "A man is responsible for all the good he can do."[58] On these grounds it is clear that Finney held a position within the central core of the Evangelical synthesis, with its emphasis upon revivalism and reform.

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[55] Finney, Lectures on Revivals of Religion (edition cited), p. 176.

[56] This is the title of Lecture XI, Ibid., pp. 174ff.

[57] Ibid., pp. 176, 177.

[58] Ibid., p. 115.

Further, it may be argued that Finney conceived the training of the ministry in instrumental terms. His careful delineation of the "new measures" in experimentally justified rubrics pointed to the instrumental nature of the ministry, and thus to a design for the training of ministers in a purposive way. If the ministry of the Church was to hasten the millennial day, it must function with rigorous regard for revivals and reform. It was for the training of ministers of this stamp that Finney became the first Professor of Theology at Oberlin College. A "well instructed ministry" was part of Finney's world-view with respect to his scheme of Moral Government. There could be no physical coercion in this world-view, because, as he proposed,"If God's government is moral, we can understand the philosophy of the Spirit's influences in convicting and sanctifying the soul; that this influence is moral, persuasive, and not physical."[59] Again, "If God's government is moral, we can see the necessity and power of Christian example. Example is the highest moral influence."[60] And finally, "If God's government is moral, we see the necessity of a well instructed ministry, able to wield the motives necessary to sway mind."[61] It is concluded that for Finney the instrumentalities of the ministry must be centered in a powerful moral suasion, and that ministers must be educated to wield the motives "necessary to sway mind."

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[59] Finney, Lectures on Systematic Theology, II (1846), 28.

[60] Ibid.

How was such a ministry to be trained? In connection with this question, the pietistic strain in the Evangelical synthesis became manifest. Since Finney, himself, had little that might be called formal education, it is not surprising that he spoke with great force against the evils of "an educated ministry." It was not a general education of the intellectual and literary type, in the tradition of the liberal arts, that was desired, but an education "to prepare young men for _the peculiar work to which they are destined_."[62] In a typical passage, Finney said:

> Those are the _best educated ministers_, who win the most souls. Ministers are sometimes looked down upon, and called very ignorant, because they do not know the sciences and languages; although they are very far from being ignorant of the _great thing_ for which the ministry is appointed. This is wrong. Learning is important, and always useful. But after all, a minister may know how to win souls to Christ, without _great_ learning, and he has the best education _for a minister_, who can win the most souls to Christ.[63]

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[61] _Ibid_.

[62] Finney, _Lectures on Revivals of Religion_ (edition cited), p. 187.

[63] _Ibid_., p. 186.

It was Finney's view that there was a great defect in the mode of theological education. "This is a SOLEMN FACT," he said, "to which the attention of the whole church should be distinctly called; that the great mass of young ministers who are educated accomplish very little."[64] "The grand mistake is this," said Finney. "They direct the mind _too much to irrelevant matters_, which are not necessary to be attended to. . . . Under pretence of disciplining the mind, they in fact scatter the attention, so that when they come to their work, they are awkward, and know nothing how to take hold, or how to act, to win souls. This is not universally the case, but too often it is so."[65]

Finney argued for a training of the ministry that should be developed along pragmatically conceived lines. "God forbid," he exclaimed, "that I should say a word against an educated ministry. But what do we mean by an education for the ministry?" He meant that ministers should be educated "as to be fitted for the work."[66] He believed that the ordinary seminary graduate was ill-prepared for the revival and reform of the Church. "Like David with Saul's armor," Finney said, "he comes in with such a load of theological trumpery, that he knows nothing what to do."[67] This was quite a different view from that expressed in a resolution of the Presbytery of Cayuga, of Western New York, in 1801:

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[64] _Ibid_.

[65] _Ibid_., p. 187.

[66] _Ibid_.

> Resolved, That, extraordinary instances excepted, we will neither encourage nor admit to examination before us any applicant for license to preach as a Candidate, unless he shall have received a Degree at some College, or produce evidence of having studied the Languages, Arts, & Sciences under some able teacher or teachers; & unless he be found on examination to possess a good degree of Knowledge of the Latin & Greek Languages, English Grammar, Mathematics, Logic, Rhetoric, Geography, & Natural Philosophy.[68]

Finney also gave evidence that he stood within the Evangelical-pietist tradition when he compared a holy ministry with an educated ministry. There was a tendency in this tradition to assume that these two qualities were exclusive one of the other. "Ah! if we had a holy ministry," Finney exclaimed, "it would be far more important than an educated ministry. If the ministry were holy enough, they would do without so much education. God forbid that I should undervalue an educated ministry. Let ministers be educated as well as they can, the more the better, if they are only holy enough. But it is all a farce to suppose that a literary ministry can convert the world."[69] It is significant to note that these words were spoken in New York in 1836 or 1837 after Finney had become engaged in the process of training a revivalist ministry at Oberlin as Professor of Theology.

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[67] Ibid.

[68] William W. Sweet, Religion on the American Frontier; Vol. II, The Presbyterians 1783-1840, A Collection of Source Materials (New York: Harper & Bros., 1936), p. 472. This resolution of the Presbytery of Cayuga is dated June 16, 1801, and thus represents the demand for an educated ministry on the frontier of western New York.

As the protagonist of a new type of ministerial education, with its emphasis upon the practical, or instrumental, role of the minister, he stood in opposition to the classical Reformed tradition, and the earlier theocratic tradition in America. His view was supported by many who were anxious to get on with the task of "plucking brands from the burning," thus unhappy with the discipline of academic learning. Typical of this support was a correspondent from Oneida Institute who wrote to Finney:

> I cannot see what good it will be to study Latin & Greek. If I were the best linguist in the universe, it would not aid me in telling a heathen sinner the way to go to the Saviour's feet. I wish you would tell us a little about this thing. It is mocking the doors of Hell to sit here calmly studying, when we ought to be in the field persuading & beseeching men to flee from the wrath to come. I do not mean no study--a man must be thoroughly furnished--but can he not be so without so much time spent."[70]

Another example illustrates the influence of Finney's own lack of formal theological education. During an illness of Beman, pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Troy, New York, John P. Cushman wrote to Theodore Weld:

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[69] Finney, Lectures to Professing Christians (New York: John S. Taylor, 1837), p. 106.

[70] Correspondent from Oneida Institute to Finney, July 15, 1833, Finney Papers, OCL.

> We have had a solemn consultation today, and the unanimous wish expressed, as the result of our deliberations is that *you obtain licence this next week*, and be here by next Sabbath after to supply our desk till Br. B. is recovered. Say not nay. Br. Weld, we believe it to be your duty at once to take this step. What are you doing, which should hinder? Precious time is wasting, in reaching after improvement in preparatory studies. So did not Br. F[inney]. So did not the early disciples. So to do is wholly unnecessary for you and this you know. . . . Don't grieve the Holy Spirit by listening to the suggestion, that you must pass thro a Theo[logical] Sem[inar]y to meet the wants of an unholy ministry or people.[71]

But Weld did go to Oneida Institute and to Lane Theological Seminary. There he became one of the leaders of the Lane Rebels, who left Lane Seminary to come under the instruction of Finney at the Oberlin Institute.

At Oberlin, from 1835 to 1875, Finney played an important role in the education of a "well instructed ministry." In his inaugural address as Professor of Theology in 1835 he soundly criticized the traditional academic education of ministers. He pointed out that their physical education was defective--"It rendered them soft and effeminate." Their mental education was likewise defective. Finney said, "Their studies, for the most part, consisted in efforts of memory, while it should consist in the disciplining of the mind and invigorating of the understanding--in teaching students to reason consecutively,--to think on their legs--to draw illustrations living from nature around them--and understand the law of God." He continued, "Their moral education was defective. They pursued such studies that the more they studied the more cold their religious affections must become, because their minds were employed upon topics that alienate them from God."[72] It was Finney's intention to change all that, and with a view to his interest in the "practical" training for the pastorate, and his personal eccentricities, it might be supposed that his lectures on Pastoral Theology would constitute one of the distinctive courses in the curriculum at Oberlin. And so they did.

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[71] John P. Cushman to Weld, February 8, 1830, *Letters of Theodore Dwight Weld, Angelina Grimké Weld, and Sarah Grimké, 1822-1844*, Edited by Gilbert H. Barnes and Dwight L. Dumond, I (New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1934), 33-34.

The lectures on Pastoral Theology were given in the senior year so that the students might go forth with goodly advice ringing in their ears. Three of Finney's own manuscript lecture outlines are in the Oberlin library: one is undated, but apparently belongs to the period of the forties and fifties; the other two are dated 1872 and 1875 respectively.

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[72] Quoted in Robert S. Fletcher, op. cit., II, 727, from the Ohio Observer, July 9, 1835.

The outline for 1875 is written in very large script to aid the failing eyes of an octogenarian. In addition to these lecture outlines there are three sets of students' notes on the lectures, taken in 1837, 1843, and 1857.[73] According to Robert S. Fletcher, who had the opportunity of studying the E. J. Comings' MS Notes of 1837, as the historian of the college, in 1837 the course consisted of only six lectures which were almost entirely devoted to the subject of proper manners and the relations of ministers with the opposite sex.[74] The course was enlarged in 1843 to some twenty lectures including study habits, business habits, hints on the preparation and delivery of sermons, suggestions with regard to pastoral visitation, as well as some straight talk on the subject of etiquette. There was no major change in the content of these lectures after 1843, and it appears that no change in the treatment of these topics was thought to be necessary.

At the beginning of the term, Finney defined pastoral theology as embracing "the whole field of the Pastoral Office."

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[73] E. J. Comings' MS Notes, 1837 (these notes are in a private collection and were not available for this research); William A. Westervelt, MS Notebook, notes on Political Economy, Chemistry and Pastoral Lectures, 1842-1843, OCL; and, Smith Norton, MS Notebook, notes on sermons and lectures, 1857, OCL.

[74] Robert S. Fletcher, op. cit., II, 728.

He distinguished between the office of the evangelist and that of the pastor. It was the province of the former to "win souls to Christ & gather a flock," and of the latter to "feed, lead, superintend, & watch over it." He defined general theology as the study of "God, His attributes & relations," while pastoral theology was the practical study of the pastor's role in the midst of his people.

Finney taught that there was a necessary reciprocity in the life of the Church between the pastor and his people. On the one hand, the pastor must "demean himself [so] as to deserve the confidence of the People," "avoid every irrelevant engagement," and thus "give himself wholly to the work." He must "feed the flock with truth well digested," "warn them publicly and privately," "pray for & with them," and "bring everything into the light of the law of God." On the other hand, it was the duty of the people "to relieve him as far as possible from all that . . . is not his proper work," "to receive him as one called and sent of God as an ambassador from the court of heaven," "to attend his appointments," "to receive and obey the truth," "to cordially & boldly cooperate with him in forming & controlling publick sentiment in respect to every branch of morals," and "to illustrate the Gospel in their lives."[75]

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[75] Acknowledgement is made here to the help received from the thorough treatment of these lectures by Robert S. /Fletcher

This reciprocal nature of the relationship between the pastor and his people in the work of the Church was a favorite theme with Finney. He always emphasized the importance of lay participation in revivals and reform movements. For instance, in his Letters on Revivals, he wrote:

> Now for the health of the church it is indispensible that they should be actively and individually employed in promoting the cause of religion. The more labor can be thrown on them the better. The more they are put forward in holding prayer meetings, in personal conversation from house to house, and in every way except in public preaching, the more it is for the health of the church, and for the real interests of piety in any community.

He continued:

> I know that some have been afraid that in this way, laymen would get out of their place, become proud and interfere with the office of the ministry. But I beg leave to say to my brethren, that I do not think it best for ministers to attempt to be the keepers of the humility of the laymen. The true way to make christians humble is to make them holy. The true way to make them holy, is to push them forward in doing all they can by their own active exertions to promote religion.[76]

This peculiar blending of holiness and activism was a characteristic of Finney's thought, commingled in his doctrine of

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(Cont.) Fletcher in "The Pastoral Theology of Charles G. Finney," Ohio Presbyterian Historical Society, Proceedings, III (June, 1941), 28-33.

[76] Finney, "On the Importance of Lay Labor in the Promotion of Revivals," Letters on Revivals, No. 28, The Oberlin Evangelist, VIII, No. 7 (April 1, 1846), 51. Also cf. "How Churches Can Help Ministers," Lecture XIII, Lectures on Revivals of Religion (edition cited), 223-249.

disinterested benevolence and expressive of the spirit of the age.

Concerning qualifications for the ministry, he emphasized a "living, ardent piety--not last year's piety--but living now." Finney was a vigorous man, himself, and always encouraged hard work and exercise, true manhood, as the proper companion to piety. Hence, to piety he added "age and manhood," "aptness to teach," proper education, "the call," and ordination. In his discussion of the call to the ministry, the four elements usually associated with vocation--the call to be a Christian, the secret call, the providential call, and the ecclesiastical call--were always implied, but there was special emphasis upon the secret call, which was man's "intense sympathy with man, not in his adventitious relations, but in his relations to ideal self, to God, to Eternity." The call to the ministry was a call to "man hunting, man loving." Christ's ministers are "called to men."[77] The minister should have "an amiable temper," a "body not deformed," "a spirit of self-sacrifice," a "gift of personal conversation," moral courage, patience and perseverance, independence, "a mellow sensibility," strong faith, "deep spiritual discernment," and "common sense."

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[77] Finney, "Call to the Ministry," (the last of his dated outlines), October 31, 1875, Finney Papers, OCL.

Finney indicated that the minister's education should enable him to acquire an understanding of logic, "a sound mental philosophy," "at least so much knowledge of language as to be accurate & perspicuous," "an outline at least of natural science," and a thorough grounding "in the fundamentals of both natural & revealed theology." Other personal qualifications were emphasized: especially, "dignity of character" not as shown in "studied reserve," "anti-social carriage," "affected sanctity," or in officious "airs & Manners," but demonstrated in "such serious purity of conversation as to forbid all trifling in [his] presence," and "such a compassionate earnestness of piety as shall force the impression that [he is] a serious & a holy man."

The advice Finney gave to his students on the subject of etiquette is a treasury of social commentary on the practices of the time and the region. It displays the reaction of the gentleman from New York City to the manners of the "pious, and indigent" youth, mostly from rural and frontier areas. True piety demanded that the minister should be dignified and grave, but not morose or sanctimonious; he should always avoid "all winking and roguishness," and levity. A minister should be polite and observe "unusual personal kindness." Any airs of superiority were to be cut away; for he said, "Where ministers hold out the idea that they are the great ones of the earth they create a false impression of religion."

In 1843 he said to his students: "True politeness is nothing else than the practice of true benevolence," and, in 1857 he told them: "Good manners [are] benevolence acted out, bad manners, selfishness acted out." Ministers must avoid slovenliness, affectation, effeminacy, coarseness and vulgarity, impertinence, and a spirit of contradiction. By all means they should eschew "band box manners" and anything of style that might be seen as "foppish." In 1843 he discouraged the wearing of beards and whiskers, ruffles, rings, breast pins, etc.; but, this was before he adopted the style of growing a beard himself. A great deal of time was given, and apparently needed, to instruction against vulgar and coarse manners. Fletcher summed up his teaching in this way:

> They should not blow their noses with their fingers; they should not use a dirty handkerchief; they must not spit on the carpet; they must not put their feet and muddy boots on the sofa or on the door jambs, nor pull off their stockings before a family! He related the story of a young clergyman who "called on some ladies after walking some distance, took off his boots & hung his socks on the andirons the first thing," and told of another ministerial acquaintance who "put his feet up in a window in a lady's parlor to enjoy the cool air!" He advised the embryo preachers to keep their nails cleaned and pared and their teeth clean. It was disgusting, he said, "in anxious meetings to be obliged to smell the breath of a filthy mouth." At table, he reminded them they were not supposed to cut their meat with their pocket knives nor wipe their mouths on the table cloth![78]

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[78] Robert S. Fletcher, "The Pastoral Theology of Charles G. Finney," p. 31.

Finney believed that it was very important that a minister should be married to a good wife. With perhaps a touch of masculine vanity, he said: "Marriage /is/ the right of women & no man for slight cause should defraud them." He also observed, "An unmarried minister is a peculiar temptation to the other sex." "Ministers," he said, "need a wife more than other men." However, if "a man is tied up to a bad wife and cannot be divorced he had better get out of the ministry." For a minister's wife he listed ten "indispensable or important qualifications":

1. Good health.
2. A thorough and extensive education.
3. Prepossessing appearance.
4. Conversational powers.
5. Discretion.
6. She should be a leader of her sex.
7. Gifted in prayer.
8. A good house keeper.
9. A good judgment in the qualities of articles to be bought.
10. Economy.

It will be remembered, in this connection, that Finney encouraged the participation of women in public meetings of religion and reform, and that his second wife organized meetings for women during his evangelistic tours in England. Further, Finney emphasized that a minister's wife should have "the ability to keep a secret," a "spirit opposed to caste and aristocracy," an "unambitious temper," a body not weakened "by tight lacing," and a "willingness to be poor." She must avoid "getting mixed up with neighborhood scandal," any "indulgence in dress," and "every appearance of fondness for the society of the gentlemen." Doubtless it was somewhat of a puzzlement for the young minister to find such a wife without the aid of a computor.

Finney declared that the minister ought to be the true shepherd of his flock; and this meant that he should be a leader in his community in secular as well as ecclesiastical matters. "He is not to admit for a moment that he is going out of his sphere" when he takes such leadership, said Finney. "The legitimate field of Pastoral influence is as extensive as the field of moral obligations & responsibility." To this end, the minister should be thoroughly "acquainted with the principles of reform," but he must not become an "ultraist" fanatic. He should visit with his people often and speak with them directly and frankly about religious things. He should not "go to get a dinner" but to transact the business of the Lord and, if necessary, rebuke them for their transgressions. Finney accepted discipline as a responsibility of the Church, but seemed to prefer that the pastor should exercise discipline in personal relations with his people, rather than referring many matters to the Church courts.

In pastoral visitation Finney encouraged the minister to be straightforward, but tactful, and never censorious. "Be careful to find your people when they are not out of humour," he wisely advised. "Never get all the family together when you want to talk to them. The devil often makes children cry." In cases of illness, he suggested a preference for visiting the sick in the morning. "Ask what kind of medicine they have been using so that you may not be deceived." "Don't assume that God is visiting them with judgments." "Always have respect for the state of the nervous system . . ." "Don't appear unfeeling." Also, he asserted that pastors must be an example in their business affairs: "Avoid trading horses." "Do not throw too much business upon your wife." "Be punctual in all business transactions." "If you have a garden attend to it. If the weeds grow in it they will grow in your heart."

With regard to the conducting of religious services, he gave detailed advice that had some practical value, but little liturgical content. He stated that the invocation should be short and solemn. The Scriptures should be read slowly, with appropriate emphasis, and "with unction." In all situations the Bible should be handled reverently. In announcing the hymns, the minister should "name the place twice," "notice whether you are understood," and in reading the hymns he should be careful to "avoid nasal tones." Finney's own prayers were frequently long and filled with emotion, and he advised his students: "Pray in the Spirit"; "If the Lord draws you near to Himself don't be too short"; "Be honest, earnest, childlike," but "Don't be tedious." Finney's pulpit prayers were extempore and frequently bore the mark of the inspiration of the moment, as when he prayed, at Oberlin, after the choir, composed of college students, had rendered an elaborate anthem: "O Lord, we trust that thou hast understood the song which they have tried to sing, but thou knowest that *we* did not understand a word of it."[79]

All class meetings were opened with prayer at Oberlin, and with Finney this was never a matter of mere formality. Frequently the main point of the lecture or discussion was presented in that prayer. Sometimes, his fervid piety would lead him on in prayer until the whole or much of the period was consumed in supplication to God. One day, when the class in theology had been very articulate in expressing their own views, which Finney always encouraged, he closed the period with a prayer: "O Lord, do not let these young men think that, because they have let down a little line into the infinite sea of thy greatness, they have sounded all its depths! Save them from conceit, O Lord!"[80] From these illustrations of the content and manner of Finney's teaching of Pastoral Theology, it may be seen that his classes were always lively, though occasionally exceedingly pious, and very realistic in their practical considerations.[81]

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[79] Quoted in Frank G. Beardsley, *A Mighty Winner of Souls, Charles G. Finney; A Study in Evangelism* (New York: American Tract Society, 1937), p. 178.

[80] This, and other of Finney's prayers, is found in George F. Wright, *op. cit.*, pp. 274-279.

A very interesting source for the study of Finney's views on the Church and ministry is his manuscript notebook, "Church Government & Pastoral Theology." Here one can see the scope of his concerns in teaching on these subjects, and something of the content he presented. The manuscript begins on page nine with some questions upon which Finney must have lectured extemporaneously. "What is a church and when and where was it first established?" "What was its covenant and what were the blessings promised in it?" "What was the seal of this covenant and what did it typify?" From the covenant, he turned to the ordinances of the Jewish and the Christian Churches.[82] He apparently discussed the ordinances of the Jewish Church from the institution of the Abrahamic covenant, and then treated the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper as taking the place of circumcision and passover. Infant baptism and transubstantiation were also discussed. Following these ordinances he placed the question, "What is the sabbath?"[83]

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[81] A discussion of his views on sermon preparation, an important part of this course, will follow below in section 3.

[82] Finney, "Church Government & Pastoral Theology," MS Notebook (OCL), p. 10.

[83] Ibid., p. 11.

The next group of headings represented doctrinal views which have figured in the history of the Church. On succeeding pages, from page fourteen to page twenty-two, the following topics were listed: Universalism, Arminianism, Antinomianism, Socinianism, or Unitarianism, Popery, Perfectionism, Campbellism, Mormonism, and Quakerism. His method of treating these topics was to answer leading questions, as in the case of Unitarianism: "What are its peculiarities?" "What are its principal arguments?" "How refuted?" "What are its tendencies?" "What is its source?" "What are its difficulties?"[84]

The next group of topics were concerned with reform and revivals: Temperance, Slavery, Missions, Measures, Revivals, Prayer. The main heading under Slavery was, "What is American Slavery? Is it sin?"[85] The answer to this question was, of course, in the affirmative. He also discussed Sunday Schools and Bible Classes, although only the topic headings appear in the notebook. In a miscellaneous collection of lecture outlines there is a two-page outline of Finney's lecture on "Sabbath Schools," which includes twenty-six points.[86]

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84. Ibid., p. 17.

85. Ibid., p. 25.

86. "Sabbath Schools," Lecture Outline, No. 12, Finney Papers, OCL.

He began the lecture by asserting that Sabbath Schools were "most important," "most difficult," and "most abused." Sabbath Schools were to be closely superintended, using the parents as much as possible. Teachers were to be instructed in the lessons, and only "spiritual teachers" were to be employed. He warned, "Beware of leaving false impressions on such young minds"--"Especially the impression that they are not expected to yield present and full obedience to all God's commands." He believed that catechisms were of great value, "if they are the most simple, & most exact statement of gospel truth." He taught that great care should be taken in selecting a library for the school, and that the selection of hymns sung should be judicious. Above all, he stressed that the "great responsibility must be left where God has placed it, with the parents." "Christian parents should not give up the religious teaching of their children to the young & incompetent teachers." Finney emphasized that all should attend both the Sabbath School and the worship service of the Church. For those parents who thought they had insufficient time for the training of children, Finney replied: "If parents would satisfy themselves with a competency of this world's goods, and abandon their fastidious and fashionable ways of living, they would, in almost all cases, have abundant time for companionship with their children."[87]

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[87] "Prof. Finney's Letters, No. 21," The Oberlin Evangelist, II, No. 21 (October 7, 1840), 163.

The lectures on Church Government,[88] associated with the pastoral theology, began with a discussion of the existing forms. Finney inculcated that Popery dictated dogmatics, creed, and discipline; that Episcopacy was "not Republican"; and Presbyterianism was "only a modified Episcopacy." Congregationalism, alone, had the elements of "pure democracy." Finney taught that the forms of Church government depended upon the virtue and intelligence of the people. "Episcopacy," he said, "is well suited to a state of general ignorance among the people. Presbyterianism, or Church Republicanism, is better suited to a more advanced state of intelligence and the prevalence of Christian principle. While Congregationalism, or spiritual Democracy, is best suited and only suited to a state of general intelligence, and the prevalence of Christian principle."[89]

In his lecture on Church discipline Finney explained how ecclesiastical, or spiritual, courts were recognized and treated in Europe: "they are recognized as courts by the state, and regulated by civil or ecclesiastical law, which is part of the law of the land." In contrast, he said, "In this country, the church is recognized by the state, only as a voluntary association. This association is recognized as a body having its own rules of admission and exclusion. Its own by-laws and covenants. Its own creeds, and forms, and principles."[90] Hence, he continued, "church courts are recognized by the state as mainly deliberative bodies associated for moral purposes, and bound by a moral compact, and by-laws."[91] With regard to the constitution of ecclesiastical courts, he delineated the systems of the Presbyterian and Congregationalist Churches in a brief, and what appears to be over-simplified, manner. He explained how the Presbyterian session was constituted with the pastor, "or other Bishop," as moderator, with three or more ruling elders. Convened at the call of the pastor, the session was constituted by prayer. He explained that, "Bishops decide all questions of order, Session decides all questions of law, and of fact."[92] The moderator has only a casting vote; and, "If the presiding Bishop is interested in the question, he should decline to act and the elders should secure the attendance of another." Likewise, if any of the elders are interested, they should refrain from sitting on the court of inquiry and judgment. "If he refuses to comply with such a request [i.e., not to act] and the interested party shall influence the decision the superior tribunal will nullify their decision and order a new trial."[93] In "Pure Congregationalism," Finney explained that the whole membership composed the court of the Church, and the moderator is chosen for each occasion. The moderator decides questions of order and has a casting vote. But, in a "modified Congregationalism," the pastor calls meetings at his discretion. He serves as moderator, decides all questions of order, and puts all questions to the vote. "The moderator," Finney said, "is not a judge and the membership a jury, but the whole membership is both court and jury."[94] As in the case of the Presbyterian session, if the pastor is an interested party, he should decline to act. If there is no pastor, or if he decides not to act, Finney instructed that "the church should, in all important cases, secure the attendance of some ordained minister."[95] In all cases, Church decency and order should prevail.[96]

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[88] Finney, "Church Government & Pastoral Theology," pp. 39-48.

[89] Finney, Lectures in Systematic Theology, II (1846), 438.

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[90] "Church Discipline," Lecture Outline, Finney Papers, OCL.

[91] Ibid.

[92] "Constitution of Ecclesiastical Courts," Lecture Outline, Finney Papers, OCL.

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[93] _Ibid._

[94] _Ibid._

[95] _Ibid._

[96] "Church Decency and Order," Lecture Outline, No. 308 (1867), _Finney Papers_, OCL. An interesting feature of this lecture was Finney's deduction that the "rules of decency and order" are "_common_ law & therefore the _laws_ of _God_." This seems to be an extraordinary judgment for a lawyer.

While Finney was still a minister in the Presbyterian Church he wrote some interesting things about admission into the Church in his Lectures on Revivals of Religion. It is believed that he would have discussed these matters in much the same terms whenever the question of admission of converts should be discussed in his pastoral theology. "Young converts should, ordinarily," he said, "offer themselves for admission to some Church of Christ immediately. . . . NEVER WAIT, WHERE GOD HAS POINTED OUT YOUR DUTY." But, having stressed the urgency of an immediate response, he continued: "While I say it is the duty of young converts to offer themselves to the church immediately, I do not say that they should, in all cases, be received immediately."[97] He urged that the Church should be judicious in receiving converts, but if there was no immediate, and particular, reason to the contrary, they should be received. "It is important," Finney taught, "that the churches should act wisely on this point. Great evil has been done by this practice of keeping persons out of the church a long time to see if they were Christians."[98] It was a point of strong emphasis that when examining young converts for admission, "their consciences should not be ensnared by examining them too extensively or minutely on doctrinal points. . . . The object is, not to find out how much they know, or how good scholars they are in divinity, as you would examine a school, or a number of young men striving for a premium. It is to find out whether they have a change of heart, to learn whether they have experienced the great truths of religion by their power in their own souls."[99] Finney held up to ridicule a church session in New York which had ruled that no person should be received into that congregation unless they gave assent to the Confession of Faith.[100]

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[97] Finney, Lectures on Revivals of Religion (edition cited), p. 389.

[98] Ibid., p. 391.

This should not be understood as an indication that Finney did not encourage the exercise of discipline in the Church. He was, however, aware of the difficulties involved, as shown in his sermon, "God Cannot Please Sinners." He wrote:

> Sinners are displeased if the church exercise discipline, and turn out unworthy members; and they are also displeased if they do not do it. If a church suffer disorderly and wicked persons in their communion, their consciences are opposed to this. They say these church members are all hypocrites, to sanction such conduct as this. . . . But if, on the other hand, the church rise up and excommunicate these offending members, then their hearts are disturbed. They maintain that the church are persecuting some of its best members.

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[99] Ibid., pp. 392-393.

[100] Ibid., p. 393.

> They think that the proceedings of the church are very uncharitable to deal thus with persons who, for aught they can see, are as good as any persons in the church.[101]

The three "notes" of the true Church were present in Finney's teaching: the preaching of the pure gospel, the right administration of the sacraments, and proper discipline.

Finney stressed the participation of the laity in the Church, in worship, in revivals, and reforms. But he also held a high view of the minister as an "ambassador for Christ." In a sermon, "Gospel Ministers Ambassadors for Christ," he proclaimed, "An ambassador is an agent or representative of a government." Then he continued:

> The church, and especially her gospel ministers represent Christ on earth, and are engaged to do his work. The world being in revolt against its own Maker, Ruler, and Father, he sends his ministers as ambassadors to plead with men to be reconciled to God. Ministers are divinely appointed and commissioned for this express purpose. Holding their credentials from the Lord Jesus Christ, they are authorized to offer men free pardon on condition of unqualified submission to God's will and acceptance of pardon in the name of Jesus only.[102]

Also, he stressed the exemplary role of the minister as primary in setting the tone of a congregation:

> Is it not a fact, to which the experience of almost every man can testify, that "like priest,

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[101] Finney, Sermons on Important Subjects (New York: J. S. Taylor, 1836), p. 175.

[102] Finney, "Gospel Ministers Ambassadors for Christ," The Oberlin Evangelist, XVIII, No. 6 (March 12, 1856), 41.

> like people," is a maxim of unerring truth--that the spirit of a church partakes in a great measure, of the spirit of its pastor--and those who love and have confidence in him, will almost certainly drink in his spirit, and strongly sympathize with him in whatever engages his heart and draws forth his soul? If he is secular, his church will be so. If he is sticklish about orthodoxy, or has no settled views at all, such in general will be the character of his church. In short, whatever he is, so far as he has influence, his people will be.[103]

And yet Finney recognized that there were many "diverting influences," which might overcome the example of the most zealous pastor. "Great political excitements," he wrote, "great commercial embarrassments, great depressions or elevations in the business and pecuniary state of the church or the world, may, in a great measure, divert the mass of professors of religion for a time from deep spirituality, although the ministers may be awake."[104] Nevertheless, he asserted, "While the ministers of Christ are filled with the Spirit of God, the church, as a general thing, will not backslide."[105]

The ideal of a holy ministry for a holy community continued to inform Finney's view of the ministry, and inevitably this was reflected in his idea of theological education. His point of emphasis, the prevailing view of Evangelical

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103. "Finney's Letter, No. 6," The Oberlin Evangelist, II, No. 2 (January 15, 1840), 9.

104. Finney, "Letters on Revivals, No. 14," The Oberlin Evangelist, VII, No. 17 (August 14, 1845), 131.

105. Ibid.

pietists, always seemed to suggest that one must choose between a "college and theological education" and the "baptism of the Holy Ghost." For instance, he wrote in the Oberlin Evangelist:

> A great deal is said about a thorough preparation for the ministry, at the present day. And certainly there cannot be too much said upon the importance of such preparation; but do permit me to ask, what in fact constitutes a thorough preparation for the ministry? Is it a mere college and theological education? By no means. These are important; but they are far from constituting the principal part of a thorough education. Indeed they are nothing, when compared with the importance of the baptism of the Holy Ghost.[106]

But Finney's call for a pious ministry was by no means unique. While he was laboring successfully in the Rochester Revivals, the Biblical Repertory and Theological Review made the following statement to its readers:

> The necessity of unquestioned piety for the ministry is, generally, if not universally, acknowledged in the Presbyterian church, but we think the importance of its consistent, active, and controlling character, is not sufficiently estimated. We wish to bring this thought distinctly before the praying members of the church, that they may bear it on their minds with devout earnestness when they approach the mercy-seat. We desire to bring this thought prominently before the minds of our young men, who are beginning to look towards the ministry. We wish them to understand, that all other evidences of their call to enter this office unaccompanied by humble, fervid, and consistent piety, are of very doubtful character. If this be wanting, no matter how strongly they may feel impressed with the

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[106] "Prof. Finney's Letters, No. 17," The Oberlin Evangelist, II, No. 12 (June 3, 1840), 92.

> notion that they are called to preach the gospel, we credit them not. Men of doubtful or inconsistent piety are not called to so high a trust. Let them seek some other employment, and not impose themselves upon the church as pastors sent of God. We deprecate a cold-hearted ministry as a curse.[107]

Earlier in that same year, and same journal, there appeared an article raising the other issue under discussion. Concerning an educated ministry, it commented:

> If a sufficient number already educated, are not found willing to enter on this self-denying work, shall such as offer with perhaps warm and honest hearts, but destitute of suitable education, be sent to preach to shrewd and intelligent men, who would sneer at the ignorance which such persons would necessarily betray in their private intercourse and public ministrations? So urgent is the demand for gospel ministers in some places, that ecclesiastical judicatures, in connexion with the Presbyterian Church, are authorizing young men, with little previous study, to preach the gospel. Such a procedure, if it continue, will, in our opinion, be eventually fatal to the best interests of piety. The ministrations of ignorant men must soon fall into contempt with the intelligent part of the community; and then divisions will take place, and various sects spring up, in places where all might have been united under the ministrations of a man qualified for his office.[108]

Finney remained somewhat ambiguous on the relationship of piety and learning with respect to a rigorous academic education as well as a "practical" theological training. But, Oberlin, under Finney's successors, became thoroughly committed to the establishment of a tradition of academic excellence in both the College and the Theological Seminary. As early as 1843, J. A. Thome, a member of the Board of Trustees, wrote in the Oberlin Evangelist: "Spiritual qualifications . . . are of chief importance in a gospel minister, but they are not the only qualifications needed, especially not the only ones demanded in the nineteenth century." He emphasized that the minister must have a "thorough mental discipline"; he must "master all the important helps to the study of the Bible"; and he must acquire "a fund of well selected, well digested knowledge, pertaining to every department of science."[109] In the 1850's a more churchly attitude began to overtake the Evangelical pietism inculcated by Finney, and he was left to agonize over what he believed to be the decay of vital Christianity in Oberlin. "The fact is," he wrote in 1868, "our students, especially of late years, I mean the mass of them, lack the power of the Holy Ghost." He feared that ministers going out from Oberlin were too much like other ministers to attract any special attention.[110]

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[107] "What Constitutes a Call to the Gospel Ministry," Biblical Repertory and Theological Review, III (1831), 205.

[108] "Manual Labor Schools," Biblical Repertory and Theological Review, III (1831), 26-27.

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109. J. A. Thome, "The Gospel Ministry for the Present Age," The Oberlin Evangelist, V, No. 22 (October 25, 1843), 176.

110. Finney to John Keep, August 3, 1868, Cowles-Little MSS, OCL.

3. The Centrality of Preaching and the Apotheosis of the Evangelist

From 1824 to 1835 Finney gave himself utterly to his labors as an evangelist. Except for the short period of his New York pastorates, he preached primarily as an itinerant revivalist. In Oberlin, after 1835, he remained preeminently a preacher rather than a teacher. This is to say that a large part of his teaching was done in the pulpit; he believed in didactic preaching, unfolding the great themes of the gospel and the salient points of his theological perspective. From the beginning of his Oberlin ministry to the time of his death, it was his custom to preach on Thursday afternoon as well as on the Sabbath. Wright reports that the attendance of students at these Thursday preaching services increased from two hundred in 1835, to five hundred, in 1840, to more than a thousand in 1850, and to an average of from twelve to fourteen hundred a little later.[111] When he was away from the college, Finney was involved in preaching missions as an evangelist, both in Great Britain and America.

It is clear, in the light of the above facts and the content of his lectures on pastoral theology, that Finney exalted the role of preaching, in example as well as precept. His unusual personal gifts and his tremendous reputation as an evangelist gave authority to his point of view, and many students and ministers were influenced by his style. But few men could match his charisma in public address. John Campbell, pastor of the Tabernacle in Finsbury, London, remarked to Finney (commenting upon the pulpit gifts of Mr. Cornwall, an English preacher): "I need not tell you that ten weeks of such service, in such a place, is no light matter to a man like him, who like myself, speaks from his chest, not like you, from the mouth; and hence, I believe, he suffers more from one Service, than you do from three, since the Lord seems to have created you for public speaking." He continued, "You could speak on, and speak for ever, and I apprehend, when you have reached the age of 80, you will be as well heard as you were at 30."[112]

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[111] George F. Wright, op. cit., pp. 157-158.

Finney emphasized the centrality of preaching, and he believed that the great theme of preaching should be the conversion and sanctification of sinners, and the moral reformation of the world. In a typical statement, he said:

> I hold and maintain that every department of human conduct is to come under review in the pulpit, and in its place be made the subject of instruction, discussion, reproof, warning, encouragement, or rebuke. But I also hold and maintain that care should always be taken to put and keep the gospel right end foremost, so to speak; that is, that the truths of fundamental importance should always

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112. John Campbell to Finney, November 1, 1850, Finney Papers, OCL.

> have the greatest prominence--that the reformation and the sanctification of the hearts of men should always be the great theme of pulpit instruction, and that reformation in the different branches of morals should always have their appropriate place.[113]

Such preaching should have great clarity and be carefully organized so as to lead to gospel decision and practice. "One grand design in preaching," he taught, "is, to exhibit the truth in such a way as to answer the questions which would naturally arise in the minds of those who read the Bible with attention, and who want to know what it means, so that they can put it in practice."[114] The Church is "bound to convert the world," by the dominical command, as Finney worded it, "Go make disciples, or Christians, of all nations." The command is obligatory upon all christians, and implies "ability to obey it." It requires entire consecration to the task, by the whole Church:

> Now this is true of ministers; and it is equally true of all christians. That christian who tills his ground, or stands behind his counter, or writes, or prints, or does any thing else, is bound to be entirely consecrated to the glory of God and the world's conversion, as the minister ought to be, and unless he is he can never be saved. . . . Until this is recognized by the church at large, and until the followers of Christ in every sect consecrate themselves to this work, with as single an

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[113] "Explanatory Remarks from Prof. Finney Upon Certain Points in a Recent Sermon," The Oberlin Evangelist, VII, No. 20 (September 24, 1845), 155.

[114] Finney, Lectures on Revivals of Religion (edition cited), p. 89.

> eye as that which ministers are bound to have, the work can never be performed.[115]

Such an exalted end infers an elevated manner of preaching. Early in his revivalist career Finney was frequently challenged to elevate his style of preaching lest he bring revivals into disrepute. His colloquial language and sharp wit seemed to have run away with him at times; but he took the good advice he received from friends, like Beman, and corrected this problem:

> There is one thing in particular which you _must_ take care of in N. York, or it will become a matter of unnecessary opposition to revival operations: I mean the indulgence of any thing like _wit_ in the pulpit. Dr. Beecher has injured himself in that city by that course, in his speeches; but in the pulpit it will do still _more_ injury. The publick taste is against it. . . . Remember where you are, and who are around you. It is immensely important that you carry the _influence_ of the best men with you.[116]

Other Finneyites, however, failed to polish their frontier manners and soon became a hindrance to revivals, especially in urban situations. The letters of William Green, Jr. and Lewis Tappan to Finney identify the kind of criticisms evoked by coarse manners in the pulpit. Of Ingersoll, a Finneyite in one of the New York Free Churches, Green commented: "He prays sometimes half an hour. His sermons are very much too long. In his sermons, he digresses so much that they cannot understand him--which with its length makes him very tedious. He uses very many vulgar expressions. The chief of all, they cannot get the impenitent to come more than once. . . . They all profess to like him as a christian, but think his style of preaching not suited to the city."[117] In a similar manner, Lewis Tappan wrote: "In a word Br. Ingersoll is deficient in good taste, simplicity of style, readiness of manner--and does not go ahead, as the leader of the flock, as a minister ought. While we merchants are working all day, and every day, very hard we love to see a Pastor working as hard in his vocation. Is not this reasonable?"[118]

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[115] Finney,"The Church Bound to Convert the World," _The Oberlin Evangelist_, VII, No. 8 (April 9, 1845), 57.

[116] N.S.S. Beman to Finney, October 23, 1829, _Finney Papers_, OCL.

It is certainly true that Finney became more cultured in his manner, and more judicious in his expression; and, at Oberlin, his preaching and lectures encouraged a more elevated mode of sermonizing than was sometimes associated with revivals. Many however, continued to put all revivalist preachers into the category of the ignorant exhorter. The later Finney should not be classed with those of whom the Biblical Repertory spoke:

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[117] Wm. Green, Jr., to Finney, September 3, 1834, Finney Papers, OCL.

[118] Lewis Tappan to Finney, September 3, 1834, Finney Papers, OCL.

> There is yet another point, in respect to which it seems to us, that at least a bad taste in regard to preaching, is gaining ground in this country. We refer to the frequent use of extravagant, and ludicrous, and even vulgar expressions. We do not mean to condemn the use of great plainness of speech: on the contrary, we regard this as, in all ordinary cases, essential to secure the great end of preaching . . . . But it cannot be concealed that there are preachers even in the Presbyterian Church, who seem fond of a studied coarseness . . . of expression; who in their zeal to accommodate themselves to the comprehension of the most illiterate, actually insult even the understandings of those whose benefit they profess to have especially in view.[119]

Finney frequently warned his students against the extravagant, the vulgar, and anything that suggested the illiterate, in their preaching. But he did not inculcate a desire for the polished rhetoric of classical address.

Finney urged the careful preparation of all sermons. In his pastoral theology lectures he urged his students to adopt the practice of studying at least three or four hours a day, but no more, preferably in the morning after a light breakfast. He recommended the practice of using a carefully prepared sermon outline, his own method, and opposed the reading of sermons. He urged that sermon delivery should be "animated but never vociferous"; and that the minister should avoid "studied gesticulations" and all stiff formality. The preacher must put his whole heart and soul into his proclamation.

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119. "Review. On the Christian Ministry," Biblical Repertory and Theological Review, III (1831), 557.

"Men are not cabbage heads," he exclaimed. "You may [be] the most learned--yet you have God as one of your hearers. Preach so as to please God, for He is taking notes."[120]

In preparation for the pulpit, Finney urged ministers to maintain a "daily walk with God," and keep a "single eye to the great end of your ministry." There must be communion with God "about every sermon"; but, at the same time, "the present wants of your people" must be considered. Then the minister must "propose a definite impression [he] wishes to make" upon his people, and select a text accordingly, "but with prayer." He urged, "Secure Divine direction, insist upon it." "Get the train of thought, warm and fresh from God"; and then sketch it out. "Consider the substance, the order, & the structure, of the heads of discourse." "Study Unity, Perspicuity, Strength." Following his own method of preaching, he encouraged them to define clearly both negatively and positively, and set the arguments in "logical order." He did not neglect to mention, "Study to meet the wants of [the] uneducated." He warned, "Never cater to literary fastidiousness"; and be "intent on gaining for God, not for self, the hearts of the people." "Remember," he said, "your real intention will appear."[121]

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[120] Finney, MSS Lectures in Pastoral Theology (1845?, 1872, and 1875), OCL.

[121] Finney, "Preparations for the Pulpit," Lecture Outline, Finney Papers, OCL.

Having followed these instructions, the minister was to prepare his sermon "to get the unction of it." To this end, the preacher was urged, "Shut yourself up to God; keep out of company." "Don't fill your stomach." "Don't use artificial stimulants." "Watch against grieving the Holy Spirit." "Don't talk nor be talked to." "Realize your dependence on God; actually depend on his Spirit." "Seek to be annointed for & in preparation as much as in preaching." "Realize the solemnity of your position"; and "Rid yourself of the fear of man." Likewise, rid yourself of "ambition to appear eloquent, great, learned, devout." And, there was a final warning, "Beware of literary sermons."[122]

It cannot be doubted that Finney made an indelible mark upon the American Church and ministry, not only by what he taught, but what he practiced. The kind of preaching that came out of the period of the Evangelical revivals, during the first half of the nineteenth century, became normative for the greater part of the American people. Its characteristics, and Finney's part in forming them, were recognized by English observers, as in this quotation from an English periodical:

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[122] Ibid. In a lecture on "Pulpit Exercises," (Finney Papers, OCL.), Finney gave precise instructions on the prayer of invocation, the announcing of hymns, the reading of scriptures, and leading in prayer. Also, he commented further upon the delivery of sermons. These matters were treated in an earlier section. Cf. also, "How to Preach the Gospel," Lecture XII, Lectures on Revivals of Religion (edition cited), pp. 194-222, and pp. 273f.

> Whatever the Americans have or have not, they certainly have a way of preaching, and a way of speaking about preaching, which we greatly like. There is a freshness and reality about their representations of truth, most refreshing and impressive. They treat religion as they would treat any other theme of deep and momentous interest. Much good has the British ministry derived from the American. Finney alone, has done more to improve and quicken the ministry than any other dozen men. His warm, earnest, and vigorous volumes we cannot but regard, in some respects, as a fine specimen of the right way of aiming at the conversion and sanctification of men. They may have their faults, but they are just the books to take religion out of the creed and put it into the conscience; and in our country, where these creeds, and thirty-nine articles, have more or less to do with the religious conceptions of almost every man, such books are especially needed. Honor to the man, who, though gifted with a fine intellect, is content with doing good.[123]

However, changing times make "ancient truth uncouth." Following the Civil War, Finney was an aging man in a new epoch, and a less stern, and rigorous, preaching was in vogue. Lewis Tappan was forced to write to Finney, in 1866, these revealing words:

> With respect to procuring a place in which you could preach and have your sermons taken down by a stenographer, here or in Boston, I see objections to the plan. You need an audience as well as a pulpit and a stenographer, and at your time of life, with impaired strength, you would not be likely to draw

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[123] From the London Eclectic, quoted in The Oberlin Evangelist, V, No. 8 (April 12, 1843), 61.

> a sufficient audience. To arouse the mental and physical faculties you would need a sympathizing audience. The style of preaching has so far altered the past 10 or 20 years that your peculiar style of preaching would not be so attractive as it once was. So both you and the people have undergone a change. Dr. Beecher's logical sermons, were he here, would not attract a quarter as many hearers as does his son Henry whose gold is not in ingot but in gold leaf.[124]

The point is this, revivalism became one of the chief ways of dealing with the rise and fall of American religious enthusiasm. And wherever patterns of revival unfold, it is almost certain that much of Charles G. Finney will be seen in them.

In the same way, changing times evoked a different response to what constituted an appropriate definition of the Christian life. Evangelical pietism, with its rigorous moralism, was opposed to many of the social practices that became common among the new generation of youth after the Civil War. In a manuscript article, "A More Excellent Way," written in 1873, Finney showed the agony of spirit he sustained over the question, "What shall we do, to interest the younger members of our church?"[125] "How shall we keep them from attending theaters," he inquired, "going to balls, and engaging in such like amusement?" "Most christian people regard attendance at such places as sinful, and all, I believe, agree that such amusements are, at least, highly dangerous." Finney continued by deploring the popularity of "church sociables," where the youth gratify "their desires for sport, glee, and fun." "If a decidedly religious character is given to these sociables," he observed, "the young people soon lose their interest in them, and do not attend." After commenting on the various types of entertainment which were brought into the church sociable, in order to have the attraction of something new, he gave his judgment of the matter:

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[124] Lewis Tappan to Finney, October 15, 1866, Finney Papers, OCL.

[125] Finney, "A More Excellent Way," MSS Article (1873), Finney Papers, OCL.

> Let us be candid. Let us meet, and look the universal fact square in the face, that where the minister and the older members of the church are fairly in a revival state, there is never any difficulty in interesting the young in religion, and so interesting them, that they have no disposition to run after anything better, more exciting, more satisfactory, than religion itself. They are, and will remain, so interested in religion, as to prefer religious meetings to all other meetings, to prefer a pungent and instructive sermon, to any lecture, on any other subject, that could be delivered, to prefer a young people's prayer and conference meeting, to any church sociable, or any other gathering of young people, for any purpose whatever. This has been my unvarying experience for half a century of labor in the ministry, and for forty years as a pastor.[126]

His conclusion, in this article, betrayed a frame of reference which only a few of his old "Holy Band" might appreciate.

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[126] Ibid.

He wrote:

> The morality of every act, depends on the motive of action. It is never right, to seek an amusement or fun, for their own sake, or for the pleasure that we have in them. Nor, is it right to seek them, because we need them, any more than it is right to eat and drink for the enjoyment of eating and drinking, or because we need food and drink. To be right, we must alway act, from a higher motive than our personal enjoyment, or to meet our personal necessities. Nothing is right, unless it is done with ultimate reference to the glory of God, and the interests of His kingdom. Whatever is done with single eye to the good pleasure of God, and with a loving intention to honor and please Him, in the best possible manner, in other words, whatever is done, wholly for God, and as the best means possible to us, of honoring Him and saving other souls of men, is right.[127]

Finney presented this article to the New York periodical, The Independent, and it was accepted for publishing--but not without a warning note from the editor. He replied:

> But let me warn you that in this degenerate age you will find it impossible to persuade anybody that glee, fun, hilarious mirth, games, charades, and pleasure seeking are wrong. Extreme devotion to them no doubt would interfere with revivals, just as extreme devotion to harvesting interferes with revivals in August and September, or as extreme devotion to astronomy or chemistry would have the same effect. Revival work is exigent, and demands that every other employment, whether lawful or unlawful yield to it. I also am confident that it will be hard to convince the public that a Christian may not just as truly play croquet or charades for the glory of God and the honor of his name, and indulge in lively, noisy, hilarious even, but innocent sports at the proper time, such as will clear his mind and refresh his body for the more serious

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[127] Ibid.

> work of life. Do you remember the story of Lyman Beecher's getting up a sort of lively dance in his house among a company of ministers during a revival: he playing the fiddle, for the purpose of relieving the prolonged tension of mind during the fatiguing services?[128]

It is true, as Lewis Tappan's letter stated, and William Hayes Ward's letter suggests, that in the 1860's Finney was beginning to get out of touch with the "spirit of the age," with which he had been so conversant in his own great days of power in the pulpit. To the end of his life he was permitted the strength to preach regularly, and with reflections of his former vigor. And, to the end of his life he maintained the centrality of preaching in the office of the ministry, and in the life of the Church.

In fact, so vigorous were his statements concerning the priority of the evangelist, and his preaching, that Benjamin B. Warfield was led to accuse Finney of what may be called the apotheosis of the evangelist, in his famous study on Perfectionism. Commenting on Finney's recollection, in his Memoirs, that he reduced a whole room full of factory girls to hysteria by a mere gaze, without a word spoken, Warfield wrote: "As the Lutheran says God in the Word works a saving impression, Finney says God in the preacher works a saving impression. Not the Word, but the preacher is the power of God unto salvation. The evangelist has become a Sacrament."[129]

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[128] Wm. Hayes Ward to Finney, January 22, 1873, Finney Papers, OCL.

Again, he wrote:

> It is a pathetic sight to observe the aged Finney after a long life of insistence that it is only by the power of truth that men can be brought to Christ, clothing at the end the evangelist himself with supernatural powers and representing him as fitted for his functions only by the possession of these supernatural powers. It is an odd instance of the invention of a supernaturally endowed priesthood to mediate between God and man, when God is not permitted Himself to act immediately on the heart; and it seems to bear witness to a deep-lying conviction in the human soul that its salvation will not be accomplished without a supernatural intervention somewhere. The pragmatic refutation of the Pelagian construction of salvation is not a mean one. It will not work; and no one really believes that it will work. The supernaturalism thrown out at the window is very apt to creep back through some chink or other.[130]

With a view to Finney's concept of the ministry, this point needs correction. It seems that Warfield permitted his anti-Pelagian enthusiasm to lead him into a judgment that does not quite fit the case.

That Finney's theology had definite Pelagian tendencies has been granted. However, Warfield has supported his judgment that Finney called for the apotheosis of the evangelist with too careful a choice of sources. To be sure, as the Biblical Repertory pointed out in 1831, there was a "disposition which prevails on the part of a certain class of ministers to claim for themselves and for each other, the exclusive honour of being revival men, and this title is awarded to them, by not a small part of the Christian community."[131] This was a very real danger to the ministry, and the journal's point is taken as it continued:

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[129] Benjamin B. Warfield, Perfectionism, Volume II (New York: Oxford University Press, 1932), 135.

[130] Ibid.

> Every Christian minister ought to be a revival man; and it is fair to suppose that he is so, until he has proved otherwise; and it is slander to declare that he is not so, merely because he does not adopt measures which particular men have laboured to identify with all success in carrying forward God's work. . . .
>
> We believe, further, that the influence of the ministry is in danger of being counteracted by the prevalence of some wrong views on the subject of evangelism. It is becoming a popular notion, and we already see it to some extent reduced to practices, that there should be a set of men trained up for the special purpose of conducting revivals of religion; and that wherever there is a revival, they should be invited to labour; and that, for the time being, the stated pastor should feel himself to be nothing but a curate.[132]

This seems to fit the case of Finney, and probably did, to a large measure, until Finney rethought the whole matter of a revival ministry in his Letters on Revivals of 1846.

Had Warfield read the article "On Evangelists," it is believed that he could not have accused Finney of the apotheosis of the evangelist. Finney wrote:

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[131] "Review. On the Christian Ministry," Biblical Repertory and Theological Review, III (1831), 565.

[132] Ibid., pp. 565-566.

> Although the employment of Evangelists to promote revivals is manifestly in accordance with the order of God, and is of great service to the churches, yet I have observed that the churches are liable to fall, and in some instances have fallen into injurious errors in respect to their labors which have greatly hindered their usefulness, disheartened their pastors, and led them almost to the conclusion that upon the whole the labors of Evangelist, though in many cases immediately serviceable are ultimately the greater of two evils . . .[133]

He continued by remarking that it was an evil for the churches to believe that they could have "no revival at all without the labors of an Evangelist." Such a view "leads the church in reality away from God to trust in man." If a certain evangelist has had uniform and great success, "the churches fall into the mistake of expecting as a matter of course that if they secure his labors they shall have a revival, and thus they dishonor God and seriously embarrass the Evangelist." In such a case, the "church members throw aside personal responsibility in a great measure" and "they expect the Evangelist and the pastor to do the labor." He concluded that a revival might be better nurtured by the laymen and the pastor, without an evangelist.[134]

Finney earnestly worked for revivals in the Church and universal moral reforms. His own success as an evangelist

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133. Finney, "Letters on Revivals, No. 27," The Oberlin Evangelist, VIII, No. 6 (March 18, 1846), 43.

134. Ibid.

stands as a benchmark in American church history, from which modern revivalism and renewal in the Church must be measured. His life and thought showed consistency of purpose and direction, but, also, a willingness to learn and to change both the manner and the content of his message. He did not wish to be stereotyped, and yet many modern, as well as contemporary, commentators have chosen to portray him in terms of some of his more extravagant statements and practices. As with all such charismatic leaders, it is difficult to interpret all the many facets of his long career as an evangelist, pastor, and teacher. Yet, it must be judged that Finney played a most significant role in the development of the Church and ministry in the mid-nineteenth century of American religious history. Theodore Weld was precisely correct in his judgment, when he wrote to Lewis Tappan, "Finney feels about revivals of religion and the promotion of the Church and ministry in doctrines and measures just as you and I do about anti-slavery."[135]

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[135] Weld to Lewis Tappan, November 17, 1835, Barnes and Dumond, Weld-Grimké Letters, I (New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1934), 242.

CONCLUSION: IMAGES OF THE CHURCH AND MINISTRY

A. Images of the Church

1. The Elect People of God

Charles G. Finney rightly understood his age as a time of theological "betweenity." Calvinistic scholasticism, or "hyper-Calvinism," as Finney liked to call it, was on the decline under the impact of theological developments associated with the New England School of theologians, the influence of Methodism, and a sociological climate less congenial to the intellectualism and aristocracy of the theocratic tradition. Finney's theology of "means" knocked the props from under a sagging theological tradition which, although it held a high doctrine of the sovereignty of God, gave little room to the necessity of human response to the divine initiative. Finney called for the sinner to respond to the gospel immediately, and not to wait for some mysterious operation of election through the traditional channels of the means of grace. His emphasis upon "natural ability" resulted in an almost complete reversal from a theological theocentrism to a marked anthropocentrism. His "new measures" were pragmatically conceived to win the assent of the human will to be converted. The dramatic success of his great Western Revivals in the 1820's and early 1830's seemed to establish his innovations as incontrovertible. The traditional Reformed image of the Church as the elect people of God was dissolved into a view of the Church as a voluntary association informed by a Pelagian theology. Old School theologians took their stand with a grim determination, but the "spirit of the age" was against them.

2. An Egalitarian Church

As the population movement to the frontier increased during the early decades of the nineteenth century, the Methodists and Baptists, among other churches, made tremendous gains due to their egalitarian image. Congregational and Presbyterian Churches, on the other hand, found it more difficult to break with the theocratic patterns which had evolved in their traditions. It was the great strength of Finney's view of the Church and ministry to grasp the need for a further democratization of the Church, not only on the western frontier, but on the frontier of the burgeoning urban centers. His turning to the urban frontier, where the established churches were doing little to convert the large number of people who migrated to the cities to work in industry and commerce, and his revival labors that gave rise to the Free Churches of New York City, marked a significant change in the parctices of the churches. The adaptation of theaters, bars, and breweries, into places for public worship, and the establishment of free pews, were innovations that manifested keen insights into the urban problem with which the older churches had not come to grips. This whole effort in urban revivalism attempted to create a more egalitarian image of the Church. The process of democratization went hand in hand with the "new measures" and New School Theology, and resulted in the rise of "elective affinity" Presbyteries, which gave concrete expression to the diversity of theological and cultural norms, and expressed the lack of a comprehensive organic unity within the Church.

3. The Evangelical Synthesis

The theological and cultural diversity of this period led to a reassertion of the more churchly tradition, as represented in the Princeton and Mercersburg theologies. Charles Hodge defined with exquisite detail the Reformed ecclesiastical tradition, with an almost normative status given to the Scotch-Irish patterns of development; and Nevin and Schaff introduced recent German thought with marked emphasis upon a more organic and liturgically oriented community. Finney's view of the Church and ministry had little in common with the churchly tradition. He was thoroughly immersed in the "spirit of the age" which had its affinities not with the churchly tradition, but with Evangelical pietism and revivalism. The theological and cultural diversity within the Church was a reflection of the intellectual and social diversity that existed in the American society as a whole. Old social patterns, associated with the Federalist era, were changing as they passed through the Jeffersonian into the Jacksonian era. As the denominations began to formulate their individual patterns of unity, out of the general diversity, it is concluded that there was a broad consensus, with regard to Christian doctrine and practice, among great numbers of churchmen in each of the churches, creating a kind of unity across denominational lines. This consensus may be called the Evangelical synthesis, representing the consolidation of Evangelical Protestantism along an evangelical-pietist-revivalist axis. Finney was the representative figure of this Evangelical synthesis, and revivals were the representative symbol of this inter-denominational consolidation.

4. The Universal Reform Association

Finney harnessed the tremendous powers of revivals to moral and spiritual reforms of almost every description. Conversion was the change from selfish-willing to godly-willing; and one of the marks of conversion was a necessary involvement in reform activities. Out of Finney's revivals came hosts of enthusiastic workers for the numberless voluntary associations for reform, which have become known as the Benevolent Empire. The theological basis for this reform enterprise was the doctrine of disinterested benevolence, which Finney received from the Edwardean and Hopkinsian traditions. Closely aligned with this doctrine was a post-millennial view that predicted a present arrival of the Millennium, brought about by the benevolent and reform activities of the Church. This non-eschatological view of the Millennium was informed by a native optimism which had its roots deep in the cultural enthusiasms of the era. Given the voluntary nature of these moral and spiritual reform associations, the Benevolent Empire gradually became a creature independent of the churches, and took to itself powers which it exercised in such areas as missions, theological education, etc. This evoked a reaction from the denominations, which began to represent themselves as missionary organizations. The image of the Church as a universal reform association, paradoxically, tended to divorce the Church from moral reforms, because these activities were given over to the voluntary associations which were not organically related to the denominational structures. This image of the Church was renewed in the Social Gospel Movement.

5. The Holy Community

The image of the Church as a reform association, the dominant influence of Finney's life and thought before 1835, was matched with a new image after 1835, the Church as a holy community. During the Oberlin period, Finney professed a change of emphasis from preaching primarily to convert sinners to preaching to engage professing Christians in entire and permanent sanctification. The Church must be holy, and this perfection, he taught, must be the product of a whole-hearted, disinterested benevolence. This enlargement of the application of the doctrine of disinterested benevolence was also aligned with the doctrine of natural ability, so that holiness was interpreted as good-willing, or good-intending, at the very top-level of present understanding and capability. The result of this interpretation was, on the one hand, a confusion of proximate achievements with ultimate perfection; and, on the other hand, the tendency was, as in the case of the image of the Church as a reform association, toward a woeful moralism. Furthermore, as this view of sanctification centered in "natural ability," it became inevitably commingled with the sociology of enthusiasm. Finney's short-termed flirtation with physiological and dietetic reforms only enhanced the vigorous reaction to Oberlin Perfectionism. The result of this reaction, even among those who once supported his "new measures" for revivals of religion, was a divorce of sanctification from the aspirations of the denominational churches. It is concluded that this image was part of a "quest for community" in an era when established patterns of value and social relationships were undergoing radical change. The image of a holy community became the aspiration of the sect churches as they faced the problem of anomie among that segment of the population most vulnerable to a rapidly changing society.

6. The Image of the Worshiping Community

The Church as a worshiping community, in early nineteenth century America, manifested what may be called an "anti-liturgical" bias grounded in the Puritan heritage modified by frontier culture. The place of worship, and the order of the service, to a large degree lost all continuity with the churchly tradition of the classical Reformation. What was considered fitting for the church, its furnishings, and service, was determined by the local culture rather than by a theology of worship. The stress upon revival preaching led to an "auditory worship," in which visible symbols were largely discounted, and the sacraments were cast in a secondary role to preaching. A sense of awe and mystery in the presence of the Holy One was seldom evoked in a service constituted of "preliminary exercises" and the sermon. Finney emphasized "auditory worship" in which extemporaneous prayers, the singing of praise, the reading of scripture, and the sermon, were designed primarily as instruments to move the emotions and the will. The Evangelical synthesis tended to formalize and internalize this image of the worshiping community, so that it became one of the prevailing patterns of the Church and ministry in the American Church.

B. Images of the Ministry

1. A Charismatic Ministry

It is concluded that Finney was a true charismatic figure, and thus his unusual powers of presence and persuasion were gifts rather than acquired skills. Because of these unusual gifts, and the singular nature of his conversion and call to the ministry, he felt little regard for a formal theological training. The tremendous success of his revival labors established him as a much emulated evangelist. Such emulation, however, led to fanaticism, ultraism, and enthusiasms, of every sort. It is not concluded that Finney neglected to develop his gifts, for they became instruments of great power in use, but that in the careful definition of the "new measures" it was assumed that the measures, themselves, had authority and power. A charismatic ministry cannot be institutionalized, and although Finney called into question the traditional modes of the ministry in his day, he achieved only the substitution of another set of practices which were more vulnerable to cultural improvisation than those put aside. The strain of pietism present in the Evangelical synthesis tended to equate enthusiasm with piety and *charisma* with the positive, and rambling, assertions of untutored minds.

2. The Priesthood of All Believers

Finney's egalitarian view of the Church as a reform association encouraged a rigorous reassertion of the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. He encouraged the participation of laymen, and women too, in every aspect of the Church's ministry. They were to lead in public worship, but not to preach the sermon; they were to visit and witness for Christ, taking part in revivals and reforms at every level. He did not believe that an increased participation of the laity in the ministry of the Church would threaten the independence of the clergy. Nor did Finney think that the decency and order of the Church would be disrupted by such participation. His view had theological grounds, to be sure, but it was largely enhanced by a democratic view of the Church along the lines of "pure Congregationalism." Revivals and reforms in the nineteenth century completely altered the role-image of the laity in the American Church.

3. An Exemplary Ministry

The exemplary role of the minister was uncritically adopted by Finney out of the evangelical ethos. He believed that the minister must be an example of Christian living and perfection in every area of life. Without contradicting the value of this exemplary image in every respect, it is concluded that it tended to become a stereotyped image, internalized in the culture.

4. An Instrumental Ministry

Finney inculcated a view of the ministry that was specifically practical, or instrumental. That is to say that the ministry was designed to achieve certain ends--primarily the conversion and sanctification of sinners, and the moral reform of the world--and that the best means to those ends were thought to be experimentally demonstrable. Therefore, a minister did not need a liberal arts education so much as a practical, or professional, education that would instruct him in the specific arts of his calling. In a period when theological seminaries were being founded in greater numbers, it is interesting to note that the argument between those favoring a classical theological curriculum and those favoring a "more practical" course of instruction was much influenced by an instrumental image of the ministry, as held in the Evangelical synthesis and defined by Finney.

5. A Preaching Ministry

It is concluded that Finney contributed to the image of a preaching ministry through his labors as both preacher and teacher. Although he gave a tremendous impetus to the office of the evangelist, it has been shown that he did not discredit the office of the pastor. Finney cannot rightly be accused of engaging in the apotheosis of the evangelist. Rather, he supported a full-orbed view of the ministry in which the centrality of preaching was stressed--preaching that was in turn both evangelistic and didactic--and pastoral care was administered through visitation, church discipline, and the sacraments. However, his great success as an itinerant evangelist tended to support those who favored the primacy of the evangelist and neglected his full teaching on the subject.

C. Summary Conclusion

The life and thought of Charles G. Finney presents a consistent anomaly in the light of his concern for the Church and ministry and the apparent results of his theology and practice. At almost every juncture his thinking and doing ultimately proved to be dysfunctional in terms of the ongoing life of the Church. In the area of revivalism, his stress upon the "new measures" pushed the entire program to the very borders of ultraism, where many crossed over. Under the threat of this new "barbarism" the tendency was to turn away from evangelism in the developing denominations. It was easier to caricature Finney, and revivalism, than to work through his reappraisal in the Letters on Revivals of 1847.

In the area of reform his tremendous contribution to the growth of the voluntary societies became an ambiguous value when it is recognized that reform movements tended to become disassociated from the Church and operative in the external and non-affiliated societies. Again, Finney's anthropocentrism exalted man's "natural ability," confusing nature and grace, thus turning theology toward a moralism, and in some cases, a humanism. His view of entire and permanent sanctification was so open to extreme interpretations and attitudes that sanctification was divorced from the theological agenda of the churches. Furthermore, although his participation in the Evangelical synthesis seemed to unite certain evangelical segments across denominational lines, the general tendency of the pietistic-revivalistic spirit was to constrict rather than expand the significant areas of mutual understanding and labor.

In the areas of ministerial education and liturgical reform, it may be argued that Finney represented a prevailing point of view that has continued to distrust a well-educated ministry, and to disrupt periodic efforts to reestablish contact with the wider, and deeper, liturgical heritage of the Reformed tradition.

In sum, Finney's concept of the Church and ministry tended to dissolve ecclesiastical and theological structures and thus opened the Church to an uncritical acceptance of the "spirit of the age." In this dissolution there appeared within the Evangelical synthesis intimations of a "culture religion" subserviant to the American way of life.

APPENDIX

The Social, Political, Intellectual and Religious Background of an Awakened Church

The closing years of the eighteenth century had a devastating effect upon the spiritual life of the American Church. The demoralization of army life during the Revolutionary era, the confrontation with deism and atheism, the temper of political factions, the materialistic morality of Franklin, the subtle philosophical deism of men like Jefferson, and the resounding ribaldry of Tom Paine, along with other influences of the environment, created a notable low-water mark in the religious life.[1] There was a wide-spread concern for a revival of religious enthusiasm to restore the piety of the earlier days experienced in the Great Awakening. A series of awakenings occurred at the turn of the century, and following; and the patterns of revival which evolved manifested a religious ethos peculiarly adapted to the development of American culture. Social, political, intellectual, and religious forces interacted in a process which produced an awakened Church.

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[1] Leonard Woolsey Bacon, A History of American Christianity (New York: The Christian Literature Co., 1897), p. 230.

A. Social Patterns

Throughout the colonial era there was a general acceptance of the fact of cultural immaturity.[2] The Provincial Society was clearly based upon a civilization derived from European sources; but, as the Revolutionary generation began to realize the vast space and wealth to be investigated and utilized all about them, there were excited demands for the completion of their independence. By 1790 American culture was beginning to develop along lines increasingly informed by the new environment, turning aside from merely inherited forms. The line of development was established in the midst of both rural and urban growth. The greatest growth was rural determined by the migratory flow into the expanding frontier. However, although only three per cent of the inhabitants lived in communities of eight thousand and upwards, urban life continued to play a significant role in maintaining the elements of civilization which were often absent from the isolated rural communities.[3]

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[2] John Allen Krout and Dixon Ryan Fox, The Completion of Independence 1790-1830 (New York: Macmillan, 1944), pp. xxi-xxii.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 10.

1. Migration and Expansion

As we turn to the middle period we discover an increase in migrations to the frontier and an expansion of urban populations. This phenomenon was to play a significant role in the life of Finney who, although his earlier experiences were oriented in backwoods and rural communities, turned toward the larger centers of population for his revival efforts because of their pervasive influence. Cities were growing steadily during the first three decades of the middle period so that by 1830 there were four times as many urban communities of eight thousand or more than there had been in 1790. We observe that the river towns such as Albany, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati and Louisville had the greatest rate of increase during the fifteen years following the close of the Revolutionary War.[4] These towns were important terminals of the migration routes and thus sustained growing commercial establishments.

When Finney was two years old, we have noted that he moved with his parents to the wilderness of central New York. This move followed the prevalent tide of migration from New England to New York State which began about 1783 and reached its climax around 1820. There were three stages in the New

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[4] Ibid., p. 370.

England migration to the west distinguished by Frederick Jackson Turner: the movement from the seaboard up the Connecticut and Housatonic Valleys; then on into central and western New York State; and finally, the migration into the old Northwest.[5] The social influences were those associated with migration and new settlements on the frontier.[6] The effect of those social influences accounts for those adjectives most frequently applied to American religious patterns: pluralistic, voluntaristic, individualistic, democratic, pragmatic, activistic, revivalistic, and enthusiastic.[7]

Large family groups composed the bulk of the migrating hosts, but occasionally there was an entire New England village on the move and always there were large numbers of individuals. Whitney R. Cross has pointed out that "Genesee Fever" struck entire neighborhoods. "No matter how he might travel," Cross wrote, "the pioneer preferred to buy land of someone he had known at home, to settle near acquaintances

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5. Frederick Jackson Turner, The Frontier in American History (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1921), pp. 136-137.

6. Lois K. Mathews Rosenberry, The Expansion of New England (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1909), p. 169.

7. James Ward Smith and A. Leland Jamison, The Shaping of American Religion, Vol. I, Religion in American Life (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1961), p. 6.

already established at the destination."[8] These transplanted Yankees carried with them cultural traits from the land of steady habits, among which was a sensitivity to enthusiastic religion inherited from the Great Awakening and stimulated by the fervor of the "Second Awakening."

Another social pattern was associated with the immigration of English and German peoples into the Ohio Valley and Western Reserve. This immigration was to increase after 1825, especially after 1840 when a new flow set in from Germany, Ireland, and Canada. "Coming into a land where institutions, habits, and values were as yet unfixed, they found it much more a 'mixing-bowl' than a 'melting pot'--a place where divergent elements could adjust themselves by compromises into a comfortable civilization."[9] The tendency was toward the development of provincial cultures based upon preserved traditions. This was especially true during the period 1830 to 1850 when it was much more common for the migrating husband and wife, whether they were of native or of foreign birth, "to come from the same home environment and thus to preserve the tradition of their strain than to marry into

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8. Whitney R. Cross, The Burned-over District; The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850 (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1950), p. 5.

9. Dixon Ryan Fox (editor), Sources of Culture in the Middle West; Backgrounds versus Frontier (New York: Russell & Russell, Inc., 1964, first published, 1934), p. 46.

another provincial culture."[10] Philip Schaff saw these immigrations as "one of the most remarkable and important facts of modern times." He saw them as "the progress of history itself," and as the work of an allwise Providence breaking new paths "as he did two thousand years ago in Europe, and opening new and boundless prospects for the further development of humanity and of the kingdom of God." Further, Schaff saw in this pattern of migration and immigration a process of "national amalgamation" which was to be, "the grave of all European nationalities; but a Phenix grave, from which they shall rise to new life and new activity in a new and essentially Anglo-Germanic form."[11]

2. The Frontier

It is a well-established fact that the frontier played a constant and prominent role in the development of social patterns during the nineteenth century. By 1890 migrations and settlement had proceeded so far that the frontier was declared to have ceased to exist as an important factor of the

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[10] Carl Russell Fish, The Rise of the Common Man, 1830-1850 (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1927), p. 136.

[11] Philip Schaff, America. A Sketch of Its Political, Social, and Religious Character (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961), pp. 27-28, 51.

American environment.[12] But, during the middle period the frontier was indeed a major factor. Frederick Jackson Turner proposed that:

> Up to our own day American history has been in a large degree the history of the colonization of the Great West. The existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and the advance of American settlement westward explain American development.[13]

The frontier was "the line of most rapid and effective Americanization." The wilderness, in a very real sense Turner indicated, mastered the colonist. Its environment was "at first too strong for the man." He must "accept the conditions which it furnishes," said Turner, "or perish . . . ."[14] This so-called Turner thesis has been evaluated in various ways in the past forty years of scholarly interpretation of American History, yet it remains a substantial contribution to historical theory.[15] In this study it seems clear that institutions had to be created which would remain viable under frontier conditions; and the basic patterns were brought from the east and from Europe. Winfred E. Garrison has correctly pointed out that the churches which developed during this period in the Middle West were "new congregations of old types, their coloration but not their fundamental structure determined by environment."[16] The challenge of the frontier taught migrating Americans the art of building a society by breaking a wilderness. The generation of the middle period was not educated for many of the tasks that it faced, but for the great task of the period it was "the ripe product of generations of effort." Carl Russell Fish put it this way:

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[12] Turner, op. cit., p. 1. A bulletin of the Superintendent of the Census for 1890 is cited.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid., p. 4.

[15] Fox, op. cit., passim.

> As Thoreau said, the Pilgrims were not backwoodsmen, and they had confronted settlement in a new land fearsomely and not too well. Now, the average American plunged joyously into the woods with a confidence, solidly based on inherited and acquired skill, in his ability to sustain himself and to extend perceptibly the civilization that he loved.[17]

The point which is emphasized here is that the migrant Yankees and Yorkers were culture-bearers to the frontier. Kenneth V. Lottick has demonstrated that the Western Reserve presents a "curious geographical entity" which was modified only slightly by the frontier.[18] Over against the "frontier thesis" he shows how a kind of cultural transplantation took place with the result that the Reserve became "more like New

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[16] Winfred E. Garrison, "A New Country and an Advancing Frontier," The Annals (March, 1948), 19.

[17] Fish, op. cit., p. 5.

[18] Kenneth V. Lottick, "The Western Reserve and the Frontier Thesis," The Ohio Historical Quarterly, Vol. 70, No. 1 (January, 1961), 45-57.

England than New England itself." He wrote:

> The Western Reserve became, metaphorically speaking, the last stand of Puritanism. Nor have one hundred and fifty years of Ohio history been completely able to wipe away the trace of its distinctive civilization. The Connecticut Puritans (calling themselves Congregationalists), who emigrated to the Reserve in the first quarter of the last century, carried with them the means for the preservation of a culture so characteristic that even its vestige becomes significant today.[19]

The land was largely taken by 1830 and farms were parceled out and put under cultivation. The roads, farms and dwellings were arranged in a symmetrical pattern familiar in New England. The first three decades of the middle period set a pattern of ordered existence which was somewhat different from the ebb and flow predicted by Turner. Even as the industrial era progressed in New England, and was reflected in the Reserve, the social patterns continued to be informed by the inherited traditions slightly modified by the experience of the environment.[20]

The Presbyterian and Congregational Churches were in a good position to take root and grow on the new frontier. The New England migration bore latent energies from the period of the Great Awakening which had manifested a close association of the Presbyterian and Congregational Churches, particularly those of Connecticut. In addition there were numerous Scotch-Irish migrants with their peculiar loyalty to the Presbyterian system.[21] Kenneth Scott Latourette has called our attention to the fact that it was from New England that much of the effort for the winning of the frontier came; that the three outstanding leaders of revival movements--Edwards, Finney, and Moody--were born in New England; and that New Englanders played a primary role in the founding of many of the benevolent societies for social reform, abolition of slavery, for peace, and for progressive movements in education. Further, he notes that a disproportionate number of the men and women of letters in the nineteenth century were from New England stock.[22] This latent and manifest creative energy had as its source the religious vitality of the New England culture. Charles G. Finney was an heir of that "creative energy" and a participant in those social patterns which it created on the frontier. It is instructive to read Latourette's analysis specifically with Finney in mind:

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[19] *Ibid.*, p. 52.

[20] *Ibid.*, *passim*.

> Something in the New England environment seems to have been responsible for this burst of creative energy. Significantly it showed itself in the realm of the spirit more than in political administration or in business; although it was by no means absent

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[21] Kenneth Scott Latourette, _The Great Century A.D.1800-A.D.1914_, Vol. IV, _A History of the Expansion of Christianity_ (New York: Harper & Bros., 1941), p. 183.

[22] _Ibid_., p. 443.

> from these latter phases of the nation's life. The source seems chiefly to have been in that religious radicalism of the extreme wing of Protestant Christianity which had so large a part in the settlement of New England, and which, through the structure of the Standing Order, gave form and unity to the cultural pattern of the section. It was not until after the traditional New England was depleted by the vast westward migration and by the influx of the prodigious nineteenth and twentieth century European migration of quite different racial and religious composition that the stream dwindled.[23]

During the first four decades of the middle period the New England environment was projected upon the frontier. There the social patterns took shape; some favouring Christianity, and some not favouring Christianity. Although the migrants were removed from familiar social customs, the religious practices and moral codes of their home community, the very fluidity of manners and institutions encouraged the people to make a new start in the West with the very real opportunity to build the churches into the emerging new society. Again, although there is plenty of evidence on contemporary accounts that Sunday was not used for worship by many--for instance, Peter Cartwright speaks in his autobiography of heavy drinking, gambling, sexual irregularities, fighting, and murder--nevertheless, a majority of the settlers on the frontier were prepared for Christianity by the cultural atmosphere in which they had been reared. Only a small number, in proportion, were members of a church, but there was a latent receptiveness soon to be made manifest in the revivals of the middle period. Further, although the skepticism of the Enlightenment was carried to the frontier, it was to meet there a vigorous Christian impulse to overcome the barbarism of the frontier and to convert souls for the kingdom of God.[24]

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[23] Ibid.

3. The Era of the Common Man and Sectionalism

A very significant development of social patterns in the middle period was associated with the rise of the common man in the so-called Jacksonian era. American society was in the process of remaking itself, especially along the frontier, by a radical modification of the inherited, aristocratic culture. The very real question was "whether the finer fruits of civilization can be democratized without being vulgarized . . . "[25] But it was not the aristocracy of money and position alone which had a cultural inheritance. Most significant of all for the middle period was the great body of the middle classes of New England who maintained their provincial characteristics and habits against the forces of change. Of these people Carl Russell Fish wrote:

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[24] Cf. Ibid., pp. 180-181.

[25] C. R. Fish, op. cit., p. xvii.

> Like bees they lived in many communities, but the laws of the different hives were much the same--penetrating laws affecting deeply the individual in the innermost recesses of his soul. Perhaps two thousand such communities, villages, towns or small cities, each complete with its own social gradations, and to a large extent economically independent also, dotted New England, Western New York and northeastern Ohio--the "Western Reserve."[26]

Yet, the problem of democratization without vulgarization remained. Foreign travellers delighted to report upon the public manners of the new Americans; and they almost always agreed that they were bad. The distasteful habit of chewing tobacco and spitting was an almost universal male habit. Spittoons were necessary fixtures and did not mark social class. Equally distasteful were the table manners. In the hotel and in the boarding house, the knife was used to excess as for instance in the consumption of peas and ice cream.[27]

The era of the common man, during the thirties and forties, manifested a kind of individualism which was to mark the awakened Church. Controlled by a minimum of law and convention, leaders worked in a society with little to enforce their leadership. Individuals were free, to a degree never before realized, to work for themselves at whatever they chose to do, and in the way they pleased. The general effect was a burst of economic growth accompanied by a lack of cultural distinction.

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[26] Ibid., p. 22.

[27] Ibid., p. 139.

Another aspect of the social patterns of the middle period was the pronounced sectionalism. The vitality of the West was finding expression in new economic and commercial enterprises, and in the divergencies of political viewpoints between the East and the West. The political campaign of Andrew Jackson, and his subsequent victory, brought the western viewpoint to Washington. The "new measures" of Charles G. Finney represented a western view of revivalism which was to challenge the more traditional forms of the eastern ministers, thus accentuating sectionalism in the awakened Church. By 1850 the great Mississippi Valley, as well as the Western Reserve, was ceasing to be a frontier area and began to settle down into an awareness of its more permanent concerns based upon the characteristics of its population. At the same time there was an increasing awareness of a new sectionalism in American social and political life, that of the North and the South with its chief, but not only, problem the issue of slavery. Fish concluded that "the Mason and Dixon line was becoming a division between two purposes apparently more permanent, and infinitely more bitterly opposed, than had been the East and West in 1830."[28]

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[28] Ibid., pp. 336-337.

4. The Erie Canal and the Rise of Cities

The settlement of the West and the triumph of agrarian democracy provided a new challenge to the resourcefulness of the churches. A part of that challenge was associated with a new economic and social pattern which took shape around the development of the Erie Canal, the new railroads, and the growing cities. The Tariff of 1838, which embodied the economic nationalism of Henry Clay, gave impetus to the industrial communities along the Atlantic seaboard which had come into existence during the years 1807 to 1815. These were the years when American buyers were cut off from British factories and other sources of supply. But, as the Erie Canal was moving to completion, between 1817 and 1825, and as the railroads were beginning to build, a new economic climate was being created in western New York.

The Erie Canal introduced western New York into a period of agrarian stability and enterprise. Cross reports that during the twenties the population grew more rapidly there than in any other part of the country. For instance, Albany gained 96 per cent, Utica 183, Syracuse 282, Buffalo 314, and Rochester 512. Indeed, the five counties surrounding the western half of the canal experienced a 135 per cent increase in the twenties.[29] Each community exported its products to the seaboard--Rochester its flour, Syracuse its salt, and Utica its cloth--and brought commodities westward in return. Local commerce thrived on the interchange of farm produce for manufactured goods, some of which was imported but increasingly much of which was manufactured in the city itself. These boom days which persisted until the depression of 1837 encouraged a general feeling of optimism which was reflected also in the operations of the Church.

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[29] Cross, op. cit., p. 56.

The growing commerce and individual enterprise contributed to the rise of the cities and the resultant shifting populations and changing social conditions. For the churches there were now two frontiers--the expanding west, and the urban frontier. The critical question became what type of religious enterprise could win and hold the cities under Christian influences. The measures adopted upon the frontier to convert those whose social patterns had been shaped by contact with the frontier might not be so successful in the cities. It was Finney who identified the common elements present in the frontier and in the cities. He carried his revival ministry from frontier communities of the Reserve to the growing cities of the burned-over district, and on into the more established Eastern communities.

There was a class of citizens in the cities which constituted an urban religious frontier not unlike that of the West. Nelson R. Burr's brief analysis of the emergence of urban revivalism is very much to the point:

> The frontier exerted a reverse influence through the popularizing of revivalism in settled Eastern communities. Evangelical appeal became a feature of urban religion when cities contained many Protestant migrants from rural regions, and a large working class without religious ministry. These classes constituted an urban religious frontier, which challenged the Protestant churches to redeem it from practical heathenism. With industrialism and immigration toward the middle of the nineteenth century, Protestant leaders saw the urgent necessity of adapting revival techniques to urban life. Evangelists of the Second Great Awakening already had worked in cities, and by the 1820's reports of revivals in urban congregations were a feature of religious literature.[30]

Charles G. Finney spoke with the voice of authority to those on the urban frontier as he had to those in the frontier sections of the Western Reserve. Traditional forms of Church and ministry were revised to convert and enlist people caught up in changing social patterns on the frontier, in the new commercial and industrial complexes, and among new and rising professional and commercial classes such as lawyers and merchants.

B. Political Patterns

The decline of Federalism and the rise of Jeffersonian and then Jacksonian democracy in the Middle Period brought about many changes in the landscape of American life. These changes were social and religious in nature, as well as political. All of these changing patterns affected to a degree the conception of the Church and ministry in an awakened Church. The influence of the old aristocracy nearly disappeared, but its mantle fell upon capital and business enterprise, with their men of talent. The Federalist Party adopted a policy that business should go on, and trusted that with all the unfolding possibilities in the United States it should bring comfort and prosperity to all and great prestige to the nation. But, the day of the "common man" in politics arrived during the transition from Federalism to Jacksonian democracy.[31]

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[30] Nelson R. Burr, A Critical Bibliography of Religion in America, Volume IV, Religion in American Life (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1961), pp. 164-165.

1. Federalism and Church-State Relations

The Federalist Party secured much of its leadership from a certain class of persons who supported the constitutional movement of 1787. It was identified, during the Washington administrations, with advocates of Hamilton's financial system, an attitude of neutrality in foreign affairs, and the firm enforcement of domestic laws. The Federalists tended to constitute an aristocracy which associated the country's well-being with that of the prosperous citizens--those whom Dixon Ryan Fox called "the few, the rich, and the well born."[32] There was a strong sectional feeling within the party which favored the commercial interests of the Northeast. However, there were Federalist strongholds in the South after 1800, despite the predominance of Jeffersonianism. Even in the West there were those few who scored Republicans.

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[31] Dixon Ryan Fox, The Decline of Aristocracy in the Politics of New York (New York: Columbia University, 1919), p. 438.

At the opening of the nineteenth century democracy was new and men were still described as gentlemen or simple-men in America as they were in Europe. Federalism engendered a feeling for this disparity of rank among men based upon property, but it could not long endure in a country where abundant resources and land were available to energetic citizens. The decline of this aristocracy of birth resulted in two different political patterns which were reflected in Finney's life and thought. In New York the pattern took the shape of a transition from Federalism to Clintonians, and from Clintonians to Whigs. There the growing commercial classes tended to predominate.[33] In Connecticut there was a struggle between the Federalists and the Republicans which was dramatically portrayed in the Church-State relations.

The influence of the old aristocracy continued to be felt in the politics of New York even as the Federalist party declined. "Part of the legacy of Federalism to its successors," remarked Dixon Ryan Fox, "was, of course, made up of some personal ideas--distinction of deportment, appreciation of arts and letters, and other qualities of culture--and this gave the party a prestige beyond that of its numbers."[34] Frances Wright wrote from New York in 1820:

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[32] Ibid., cf. title of Chapter 1.

[33] Ibid., p. v.

> The Federal, or, to speak more properly, the high government party, comprised many pure patriots and able statesmen. Their errors were those of judgement, we may say of education. They were born under a different system of things from that which arose out of the Revolution which they had assisted to guide.[35]

The old aristocracy declined, but its mantle had been draped about the shoulders of those men of talent in capital and business enterprise, whose political principle was this, that business should go on.

In Connecticut the "standing order" represented the handiwork of the Federalist party. The Congregational clergy were Federalists and deeply committed to their "Aaronic" role with the government. In 1797 that role was described by Benjamin Trumbull in characteristic words:

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[34] Ibid., pp. 438-439.

[35] Frances Wright, Letter XIX (New York, January, 1820), Views of Societies and Manners in America, edited by Paul R. Baker (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1963), p. 174.

> The most perfect harmony subsisted between the legislature and the clergy. Like Moses and Aaron, they walked together in the most endeared friendship. The governor, magistrates, and leading men were their spiritual children, and esteemed and venerated them as their fathers in Christ. . . . Thus they grew in each other's esteem, and brotherly affection, and mutually supported and increased each other's influence and usefulness.[36]

The Federalists remained in power in Connecticut for a longer period than elsewhere, but they lost ground rapidly after the Republican victory of 1817. The opposition to Jeffersonian democracy was based upon the rise of infidelity which the Federalists associated with that movement. Those loyal adherents of Congregationalism found in their religion not only a theology but also a program for society. Thus, as Professor Keller wrote: "Influenced in their political thinking by their religious beliefs, these men opposed Republicanism and worked for revivals."[37] This is not to say that religious means were used for political ends, but that religion must be kept in mind when explaining the nature of Federalism in Connecticut. When the constitution was adopted in 1818 the Federalist party soon disappeared, but their contribution to the Second Great Awakening remained.[38]

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[36] Benjamin Trumbull, A Complete History of Connecticut, Civil and Ecclesiastical, from the Emigration of its First Planters from England, Vol. I (Hartford: Hudson and Goodwin, 1797), p. 301.

[37] Charles Roy Keller, The Second Great Awakening in Connecticut (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1942), p. 56.

This alignment of Federalism with Congregationalism in Connecticut accounts for the difference in the revivals under Timothy Dwight and his immediate successors from the earlier revivals in that area, and from the great revivals which began in the West around 1801. The religious language was that which called for personal and eternal salvation, but the leaders frequently revealed that they had other ends in view as well: the Standing Order and Federalism must be saved from infidelity, Jacobinism, and the Democrats. In Professor Mead's judgment, "Dwight could not dissociate true religion from the established Church--he could hardly dissociate Christianity from Federalism."[39] This type of leadership in revivals tended to deemphasize subtle theological distinctions and tended to become more conciliatory in both doctrine and practice. Under Dwight the old lines of division began to be forgotten; and forgotten they were until the "new measures" controversy, fired by Finney, stirred up the old embers.

The Church was awakened by revivals but disestablishment seemed only a frightful possibility to Lyman Beecher. If it came, irreligion and government intrigues were sure to follow, and so Beecher thundered out his warning:

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[38] Professor Keller's definitive study develops this thesis: "In Connecticut, then, a peculiar combination of economic, political, social and religious conditions existed which help to explain why this small, conservative Congregationalist-dominated New England state became a leader in the Second Great Awakening." *Ibid.*, p. 12.

[39] Sidney Earl Mead, *Nathaniel William Taylor, 1786-1858, A Connecticut Liberal* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942), p. 48.

> Let the wastes multiply till one third of the freemen shall care for no religion, one third attach themselves to various seceding denominations, and a remnant only walk in the old way, and the unity of our counsels and the vigor of our government would be gone. The business of legislation would become a scene of intrigue and competition, of religious and political ambition, of temporizing compromise and bargain and sale. Each party would soon have its ambitious leaders, who would kindle the fire to warm themselves by, and cry persecution to seat themselves in high places.[40]

But, when the fateful day came Beecher began to see the situation in a clearer light. Recalling the victory of the Democrats, he wrote in his Autobiography:

> It was a time of great depression and suffering. It was the worst attack I ever met in my life, except that which Wilson made. I worked as hard as mortal man could, and at the same time preached for revivals with all my might, and with success, till at last, what with domestic afflictions and all, my health and spirits began to fail. It was as dark a day as ever I saw. The odium thrown upon the ministry was inconceivable. The injury done to the cause of Christ, as we then supposed, was irreparable. For several days I suffered what no tongue can tell for the best thing that ever happened to the State of Connecticut. It cut the church loose from dependence on state support. It threw them wholly on their own resources and on God.
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> They say ministers have lost their influence; the fact is, they have gained. By voluntary efforts,

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[40] Lyman Beecher, "The Building of Waste Places," Works, Volume 2 (Sermons) (Boston, 1952), p. 116.

> societies, missions, and revivals, they exert a deeper influence than ever they could by queues, and shoe-buckles, and cocked hats, and gold-headed canes.[41]

Federalism had valued the clergy as a conservative and stabilizing influence in society; the clergy had inaugerated the distinctive method of voluntary societies to support their benevolent enterprises, and they had preached for revivals. Their efforts during the quarter century before Finney's appearance had produced no spectacular results for lack of enthusiasm and manpower;[42] but, following the demise of Federalism, a new pattern was forming. Lyman Beecher saw a new day for voluntary societies and revivalism, and the "new measures" of Finney and his followers provided the enthusiasm and manpower which brought it to pass.

2. Jeffersonian Tendencies

The Republicans were elated with their victory in what Jefferson liked to call "the great revolution of 1800." The creed of that party proclaimed the establishment of a more democratic way in America, and the Republicans proceeded with their radical changes without the violence that marked the world-wide struggle of which their battle with the Federalists was but one phase.[43] Whereas the Federalists were committed to business enterprise, a vigorous foreign policy and sound finance, the Republicans cherished the ideal of an agrarian republic and resented the broadening of governmental powers achieved under a liberal interpretation of the Constitution.[44] Frances Wright summarized the Republican policy to one of her correspondents in these words:

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[41] Lyman Beecher, The Autobiography of Lyman Beecher, Edited by Barbara M. Cross, Volume I (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1961), pp. 252-253.

[42] John R. Bodo, The Protestant Clergy and Public Issues, 1812-1848 (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1945), p. 13.

> The elections which raised Mr. Jefferson to the chief magistracy brought with them a change both of men and measures. The most rigid economy was carried into every department of government, some useless offices were done away, the slender army was farther reduced, obnoxious acts, passed by the former Congress, repealed, and the American Constitution administered in all its simplicity and purity.[45]

The anger of the fallen Federalist minority vented itself in a paper war which accused the Republicans of the atheism and anarchism of the French revolutionaries.

The Republicans' response to the Federalistic attack tended toward anti-clericalism, but they were cautious to dispell the idea that their policy was anti-religious. They soon demonstrated that they were not determined to destroy moral principles and public order, and after the Hartford Convention of 1814, which discredited the Federalists, the Congregational clergy turned their attention more avidly to the revivals under way. Professor Keller remarked that, "Perhaps the Awakening with its revivals and numerous organisations and enterprises may have engrossed the ministers so completely that they had little time for political exertions."[46]

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[43] John A. Krout and Dixon Ryan Fox, The Completion of Independence, 1790-1830 (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1944), p. 162.

[44] Ibid., p. 153.

[45] Frances Wright, op. cit., Letter XIX (January, 1820), p. 175.

As the political area enlarged to the West there was increasing concern with what one author in 1818 called the "Retrograde Movement of National Character."

> The manner in which the population is spreading over this continent has no parallel in history. The first settlers of every other country have been barbarians, whose habits and institutions were suited to the wild and wandering life. As their members multiplied, they have gradually become civilized and refined. The progress has been from ignorance to knowledge, from rudeness of savage life to the refinements of polished society. But in the settlement of North America the case is reversed. The tendency is from civilization to barbarism.[47]

This retrograde movement in American culture became immensely significant as the political center of gravity shifted toward the West in the Jacksonian era. Not only did it affect the style of the political pattern, it also affected the style of measures utilized by the ministry of the Churches in their revivals and voluntary societies. There seemed to be an inherent tendency during this period toward extremism. Conservatives in religion accused Finney of "ultraism"; Philip Schaff characterized the political tendency as "radicalism." He wrote:

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[46] Charles Roy Keller, _op_. _cit_., p. 64.

[47] M. N., "Retrograde Movement of National Character," _The Panoplist_, XIV (1818), 212-13; quoted in Charles I. Foster, _An Errand of Mercy; the Evangelical United Front 1790-1837_ (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1960), p. 8.

> RADICALISM finds in republican America full play for its wild, wanton revellings, its reckless efforts to uproot all that is established, and to lift the world off its hinges. There is a great deal of political atheism in that country, which practically denies the divine origin of civil government altogether, and makes the sovereign people not only the medium and instrumental cause but the ultimate source of all power. And this kind of democracy is generally only a decent name for social despotism, or downright mobocracy.[48]

After the precarious "Era of Good Feelings" the party lines were restructured. The conservatives and theocrats gave their sympathies to the Whigs; but the center of power was to locate in the Jacksonian Democrats.

3. The Jacksonian Era

The political and social changes which America underwent during the half century that ended with General Jackson's election were perhaps the most radical and sweeping it has ever undergone in so short a time. From the Jeffersonian agrarian and handicraft economy a modern industrial economy emerged. It passed from colonial weakness to actual power; and from a relatively simple, rural culture to the complexities of a growing population, sectionalism, mechanized industry, urban slums and monetary credit. The industrial and technological revolution, fed by vast resources awaiting exploitation, contributed to an immense democratic expansion. Socially the Jacksonian revolution signified that a nation of democrats was irritated with government manipulated by gentlemen from Virginia and Massachusetts. "As Professor [William Graham] Sumner observed, what seems to have enchanted people with General Jackson when he became a candidate for President was not any principles or policies he advocated but his breaches of decorum, real or alleged."[49] Economically, the Jacksonian revolution signified that conservative limitations on business enterprise would not be tolerated by a nation of potential money-makers. Professor Hammond states, "The Jacksonian revolution was a consequence of the Industrial Revolution and of a farm-born people's realization that now anyone in America could get rich and through his own efforts, if he had a fair chance. A conception of earned wealth arose which rendered the self-made man as superior morally to the hereditary well-to-do as the agrarian had been."[50]

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[48] Philip Schaff, America. A Sketch of Its Political, Social, and Religious Character, Edited by Perry Miller (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961), p. 9.

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[49] Bray Hammond, *The Jacksonians*; in James L. Bugg, Jr. (editor), *Jacksonian Democracy, Myth or Reality?* American Problem Series (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1962), p. 93.

The people of America were discovering themselves in this time of rapid change, and they made of Andrew Jackson a mirror in which they could see their own image. He was the symbol for an age in which the cult of the self-made man prospered in America under the auspices of nature and providence. The favor of God seemed to depend upon each man's exertion, thus, the people of the Age of Jackson easily reconciled their personal striving with cosmic determinism. The secret of Andrew Jackson's power was his reflection of the period in which he lived. There were other men who excelled him in governmental experience, wisdom, and judgment; but these were not the qualities admired by the American democrats of the day. They saw in him courage, strength, and directness; and these things they honored. Ignorance could be tolerated, but not hesitancy.[51] "More than folklore," says Walter E. Hugins, "is responsible for the conception of Jacksonian Democracy as largely inspired by Andrew Jackson--that 'the American people looked through his eyes, and thought with his brain.'" Yet, it is necessary for him to go on to say, "But while it is undeniable that he was in many ways a genuine man of the people, sharing in a large part their prejudices and idiosyncracies, Jackson was in many ways more the product than the prime mover of that social, economic and political upsurge that we know as Jacksonian Democracy."[52]

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[50] *Ibid*., p. 93.

[51] See John W. Ward, *Andrew Jackson, Symbol for an Age*; in James L. Bugg, Jr., *op*. *cit*., pp. 107-108.

As a movement, Jacksonian democracy accented liberty and equality. It was a crusade aimed at establishing equality of opportunity for all, and to this end it was imbued with a realistic sense of the political power of the masses. "This crudading spirit" says Glyndon G. Van Deusen, "helped to give it vitality, for, while the party contained many conservative and quasi-conservative elements, its leaders kept on the alert for causes which would enable them to portray the party as the protector of the common man against aristocracy and privilege."[53] The American people wanted social change and their concern was primarily for amelioration of individual conditions rather than for the party itself. Hugins' careful study of the relationship of "The New York Workingmen Movement" and Jacksonian democracy enables him to conclude:

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52. Walter E. Hugins, "The New York Workingmen and Jacksonian Democracy 1829-1837" (typed Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1958), p. 1.

53. Glyndon G. Van Deusen, The Jacksonian Era 1828-1848 (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959), p. 93.

> Jacksonian democracy, therefore, as it developed in New York was the product of the interaction of diverse groups whose common denominator was not loyalty to the President or the Party, but the desire for social change and individual amelioration. The Workingmen represented an important and at times influential element in this movement.[54]

The specific problem which faced the party was to control the capitalistic groups, mainly Eastern, in order to assist the non-capitalist groups of the East, West and South, chiefly farmers and laboring men. Jacksonian democracy was not so much the explosion of the frontier "lifting into the government some violent men filled with rustic prejudices against big business," as it was "a phase of that enduring struggle between the business community and the rest of society which is the guarantee of freedom in a liberal capitalist state."[55]

The Democratic party's chief rival in the middle period was the Whig Party. It seems to have emerged out of a necessary merger of the National Republican party, which suffered from a weak national organization and the jealousy of its rival leaders, Webster and Clay, and the Antimasonic party, which was too narrowly based in New England and the Middle Atlantic states and had too many bitter opponents to make it acceptable as the opposition party. The Whig Party, in 1834, was a coalition of the great majority of National Republicans and Antimasons, together with an increasing number of disgruntled Democrats. The economic interests of the Whigs included industrialists, commercialists, and many of the laboring men in their ranks, as well as a number of conservative farmers. Glyndon G. Van Duesen states that "In the Ohio Valley, the pushing, ambitious, go-ahead bankers and businessmen, canal promoters, land-owning interests, lawyers with an eye to the main chance, and farmers anxious for internal improvements were more apt than not to be found in the Whig ranks."[56] The generally conservative and business interests of the Whig party represented a carry-over of Federalist principles slightly modified in the new era of Jackson. Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. writes:

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[54] Walter E. Hugins, op. cit., pp. 288-289.

[55] Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., The Age of Jackson (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1946), p. 307.

> Federalism and Whiggery represented the same interests in society, the same aspirations for power, the same essential economic policies; but Federalism spoke of these interests, aspirations and policies in a tone of candor, Whiggery, of evasion. The vocabulary of Federalism had something to do with actualities; it was useful as a scheme of analysis; it aided one's understanding of society. The vocabulary of Whiggery had nothing to do with actualities; it was useful mainly as a disguise; its object was to promote confusion mainly rather than comprehension. Both intended to serve the business classes, but the revolution in political values forced the Whigs to talk as if they intended primarily to serve the common man.[57]

The Jacksonian Era was a time when American society was in the process of remaking itself, and the significant feature was the rise of the common man. The aristocratic cultural heritage was modified by a new generation intent upon abolishing special privileges with respect to cultural property as well as physical possessions. Andrew Jackson eloquently voiced the new doctrine of man in his inaugural address of 1829: "I believe man can be elevated; man can become more and more endowed with divinity; and as he does he becomes more God-like in his character and capable of governing himself. Let us go on elevating our people, perfecting our institutions, until democracy shall reach such a point of perfection that we can acclaim with truth that the voice of the people is the voice of God."[58] The Federalist theocrats, as Professor Bodo points out, rejected this view of man. There was a problem in this belief in equality of men and their elevation to divinity. Americans became assured in their remarkable self-confidence that they were ready for any challenge. Andrew Jackson had said in his message to Congress in 1829: "The duties of all public offices are, or at least admit of being made, so plain and simple that men of intelligence may readily qualify themselves for their performance."[59] Men turned from one occupation, or profession, to another with minimum skills so that the period shows many Americans adept at many trades, while few there were who excelled in any.

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[56] Glyndon G. Van Deusen, _op_. _cit_., p. 96.

[57] Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., _op_. _cit_., p. 279.

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[58] Quoted in John R. Bodo, op. cit., p. 176.

[59] Quoted in Carl Russell Fish, op. cit., p. 9.

Another problem associated with this view of man was the decay of taste. As Professor Fish puts it: "Every man's opinion became equal, and in the absence of standards, the absurd, the crude, the ugly and the pretentious competed on even terms with the proven products of inherited appraisal."[60] This process was not without effect with a view to changing ideas of the Church and ministry. What Andrew Jackson was for the democrats of his era Charles G. Finney was for multitudes of American people. It is not surprising to discover that the views and characteristics of Finney were a reflection of the Jacksonian ethos. For an understanding of the Church and ministry in this period, Finney was both a mirror and a symbol of the age.

C. Intellectual Patterns

When President Timothy Dwight addressed the candidates for the Baccalaureate degree at Yale College on September 9, 1797 he took as his text Colossians II, 8, "Beware, lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." He was primarily concerned with exhibiting the nature and danger of infidel philosophy. He told the convocation that the Gospel is always opposed by the "philosophy of the age." He warned his hearers "To beware, lest you become a prey to the philosophy which opposes the Gospel." The outline of his address was an argument against the enlightenment philosophy of the time, which he believed a major threat to evangelical religion. First, his outline reads, "To prove to you, that this philosophy is vain and deceitful"; Secondly, "To shew you, that you are in danger of becoming prey to it"; and Thirdly, "To dissuade you be several arguments from thus yielding yourselves a prey."[61] Timothy Dwight was fighting a concerted battle against the forces of the enlightenment under the banner of evangelical Christianity. This struggle was a formative aspect of the intellectual life in the middle period.

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[60] *Ibid*., p. 228.

1. The General Intellectual Background

Under the impact of enlightenment thought which took toot in revolutionary America, a number of intellectual patterns began to take shape at the beginning of the nineteenth century. These patterns were molded by an interaction with evangelical Protestantism and themes introduced by a vibrant romanticism. There was a new confidence in human reason which stressed individualism in human affairs. Progress was considered the norm in human experience, hence the future promised more than was realized in the present. With the increased military security there was a bold and quickening advance of the frontier, and concurrently an expansion of industry and commerce. The popular doctrine called for in government policy was strictly laissez-faire. The rationalism and empiricism encouraged by Lockean philosophy was much in the foreground of thought. As evangelical Protestantism began to react, through revivals and benevolent societies, the "religion of nature" advocated by such radicals as Tom Paine slowly gave way. With the advent of the Jacksonian era, the ideal of a static society was displaced by the many faceted ideals of a romantic democracy of the common man. Professor Ralph H. Gabriel has carefully analyzed these elements in his notable study, The Course of American Democratic Thought.[62] During the middle period of American national life he sees the development of what he calls the American Democratic Faith, which is a blend of the enlightenment, romantic and evangelical intellectual patterns. The American Democratic

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[61] Timothy Dwight, The Nature and Danger of Infidel Philosophy Exhibited in Two Discourses (New Haven, 1798), pp. 9ff.

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[62] Ralph H. Gabriel, The Course of American Democratic Thought, 2nd edition (New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1940).

Faith was based upon three formative concepts: the fundamental law (natural and moral laws are grounded in a "fundamental law" of the universe) as received through the enlightenment; the accent upon the free and responsible individual (a blend of enlightenment and romantic thought); and the mission of America (a merging of evangelical religious and romantic political thought.) The Second Great Awakening and subsequent revivals stirred the American people greatly and fostered a cultural reinforcement of the romanticism of evangelical Protestantism and the American Democratic Faith. "The vision of the world saved by democracy," writes Professor Gabriel, "was the secular version of the Protestant millennial hope."[63]

In addition, the general intellectual background embraced a growing theory of economic determinism. The burgeoning commercial class, especially, became very much involved in the scramble for profit in the days of a rapidly expanding economy. In the old conflict between naturalism and supernaturalism, evangelical Protestantism rejoiced in the decline of Deism, but wondered about the advance of the natural sciences. The Newtonian world-view held the center of the stage until the rise of Darwinian evolutionary theory. In the realm of theology evangelical thought was actively modifying the strict Calvinism of the scholastic type. Once again one becomes aware that the life and thought of Charles G. Finney reflected his age. He preached against the profit motive in favor of a modest profit, and encouraged men of wealth to support the revivals and benevolent societies. Above all, he was one of the leading figures in the theological conflict which modified hyper-Calvinism.

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[63] Ibid., p. 37.

2. The Egalitarian Spirit and Evangelicalism

The intellectual life of the middle period was marked by a cultural independence gradually achieved. Fewer young men went abroad for their education, and with this detachment came an increased sense of difference from the rest of the world. Americanism was a spirit that gloried in a separation from the monarchical governments and tax-supported churches which marred the civilization of Europe.[64] Also, it was a spirit touched with an aggressive egalitarianism. The pervasive effects of this egalitarianism were seen in religion and business; but especially in politics and education. Learning and literature were thought of by many as the embellishments of a useless aristocracy, and that patrician class was fast losing its leadership in America.[65]

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[64] Carl Russell Fish, op. cit., pp. 1-2.

[65] Richard Hofstadter, Anti-Intellectualism in American Life (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963), p. 51.

At the same time, the Christian tradition inherited from the first settlers in America and perpetuated by a conscious effort in each generation continued to be the chief corner stone of American intellectual development. Christian thought brought a degree of unity to the intellectual life of a diverse people. "However widely all these social and ethnic groups differed in doctrine and form of worship," concludes Merle Curti, "they all, with certain notable exceptions, shared a common Christian conception of human nature, of social relationships, and of the nature of knowledge and beauty; and all were substantially agreed on the supernatural origin and destiny of man and the supernatural basis of the universe itself."[66] Rational discussion of theological issues had been one of the great sources of intellectual discipline in the churches, and the clergy had been a class of intellectuals intimately concerned with the policies of the government. But, with the rise of an agressive egalitarianism theological controversy became regarded as a distraction and was subordinated to practical objectives which were adopted as being more important. Now the mission of the evangelical churches was defined by evangelism. With so many unchurched persons in a highly mobile society, the chief committment of the church was that of gaining converts.

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[66] Merle Curti, The Growth of American Thought, Second Edition (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1951), p. 50.

With this emphasis upon evangelism, the activism and social optimism of evangelical church members and clergy came to the fore. Revivalism and the growth of voluntary societies for social action portrayed something of the tendency of evangelicalism towards anti-intellectualism. Professor Wilson Smith writes: "Evangelicalism may have reaffirmed Protestant individualism; it certainly caused the fragmentation of denominations; but it did not tend to liberalize Protestant theology. Throughout America church people were closing ranks behind factional leaders with sectarian dogmas and a single-minded public moralism."[67] This is to say, the older intellectual foundations were being shaken. The "wonderful one-hoss shay," so vividly described by Oliver Wendell Holmes, which symbolized New England Calvinism went to pieces after running for a hundred years without major repair, but the discipline of Calvinism remained to drive evangelical Christians to advocate new causes within the social order. The life and thought of Finney manifested the ambiguities of these intellectual patterns blending the intellectual tradition of New England with the new egalitarian spirit of frontier evangelicalism.[68]

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[67] Wilson Smith, Professors and Public Ethics. Studies of Northern Moral Philosophers before the Civil War (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1956), p. 93.

Evangelicalism adapted well to the self-cultivation theme of the Jacksonian era. There was a general depreciation of acquired or formal learning and an appreciation of intuitive wisdom. Thought was secondary to action; the emphasis upon the will minimized learning and training. In this day of "self-made men" formal education was "but a mere drop in the sea, when compared with that which is obtained in the every-day journeyings of life."[69] The typical evangelical pastor, like Charles G. Finney, was largely self-educated and highly individualistic in the rigorous discharge of his duty.

3. Intellectual Views and Social Action

The forces of radical change let loose in the beginning of the nineteenth-century introduced some critical problems. The scientific revolution, grounded in Newtonian physics, turned the world into a vast machine working according to fixed mechanical laws. As these laws were now known, in the physical world, it was inferred that man could rationally manipulate his environment: his life, his government, his religion. Christian thought as a conservative force held to a concern for man's relationship to God as ultimate. Man as a sinner committed offenses against God; also, he was the victim of original sin. Therefore atonement and salvation were needed. The enlightenment world-view was really quite different from the evangelical view. The *philosophes* had portrayed the ideal man as the "natural man," the "noble savage." Civilized man was much less admirable because of the two slaveries of religion and monarchy. Against this romanticism the enlightenment view declared that all irrational systems were enemies of mankind and opposed to progress. Evangelicalism held that Christianity was rational as long as it had a world of sinners to save; but there were those who thought that in a world without sin it was an empty ritual. Another problem was the rising middle class of entrepreneurs introduced by the industrial revolution which gave more attention to the expanding business opportunities than to the changing world-view.[70]

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[68] Professor Hofstadter sees Finney as a good illustration of the difficulty involved "in any facile classification of religious anti-intellectuals." Cf. op. cit., pp. 92ff.

[69] John W. Ward, op. cit., p. 109.

The philosophical thinking of our period was closely joined with social action. It was not so much directed toward systems of thought as it was toward particular problems. Ideas were borrowed with a view to putting them in action. One of the chief features was a faith in universal benevolence which was carried over into the middle period and reinforced by evangelical revivals and benevolent societies. Professor Herbert W. Schneider suggests that this trait of faith in universal benevolence can be traced to the Enlightenment and to the American theocratic tradition. "The Enlightenment," he writes, "began in complacency and ended in fear. During its early stages the faith in universal benevolence arose out of theological optimism. In America this trait became conspicuous with Cotton Mather, a pompous old theocrat, who conceived his professional duty to be 'doing good.'"[71]

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[70] Cf. Charles I. Foster, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

The great change in the intellectual patterns during the middle period was the increase of diversity of thought. It was not an age of striking originality but an age of experimentation. Ideas which had long been familiar were taken into the laboratory and workshop and put to practical use. In the same way, moral philosophers put their ideas to the test of action in public affairs. Professor Smith writes:

> The moral philosopher, moreover, was frequently spurred by sectarian motivations to act on the principles of his textbook. These were years of unremitting evangelism in American Protestantism and evangelicalism in public affairs. Champions from left-wing Protestant sects rose to battle for the Lord in many reform movements; some of them were moral philosophers, launched upon the road of public duty by sectarian enthusiasms. The premises of their social thought were expounded in the textbooks, and many of their

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[71] Herbert W. Schneider, A History of American Philosophy (New York: Columbia University Press, 1946), p. 31.

> ideas--the transmittal of Enlightenment beliefs in man's perfectibility, an optimism regarding social institutions, and the linking of religion with society--carried the spirit of evangelism.[72]

In spite of the general diversity of thought there was a consensus in the area of public ethics. Professor Smith calls this consensus a "Whiggish morality." The public philosophy of the moral philosophers was not Whiggish in the narrow political sense, for Jacksonian Democrats often shared similar standards of respect for gentlemanliness and the cultivated mind as the Whigs. There was a kind of middle class civic propriety, a conservatism in the assertion of doctrinaire standards--in private and public value judgments--that paralleled the more pragmatic social temper of Jacksonian Democracy.[73] This Whiggish morality was clearly reflected in the moral philosophy of Charles G. Finney.

D. Religious Patterns

Christianity was at low ebb in the early 1800's as the government lost the character of a divinely sanctioned order and became a strictly secular contract. The Federal constitution adopted in 1787 did not mention God, and secularism was quite evident among the early Presidents. With the dis-

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72. Wilson Smith, op. cit., pp. 42-43.
73. Ibid., p. 79.

establishment of religion the essential unity between religion and government was cut assunder in a world in which Tom Paine could picture Christianity as a "strange fable." Conservatives had depended upon this unity of religion and government to sustain a core of social equilibrium. The years following 1797 saw marked revivals, but they were not destined to be a sufficient cause to conserve the Christian character formed by Christian nurture and conformity to an approved body of ideas and attitudes enforced by social sanctions. The secularism of the enlightenment was a force to be reckoned with by the Church. The American environment needed an awakened Church. The situation, however, tended to make the Church and ministry vulnerable to the forces at work in society.

Much of early nineteenth century America was unchurched; this was the missionary challenge, and an almost endless task. The propensity to emulate many of the ways of American culture was grounded in a loss of the sense of the Church which accompanied the "voluntaryism" of the denominations. This meant that the clergy were dependent upon the support of their congregations, and hence prey to some of their whims. The

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74. Earl MacCormac, "The Transition from Voluntary Missionary Society to the Church as a Missionary Organization among American Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and Methodists" (typed Ph.D. dissertation, Yale Un., 1960), p. 313.

minister must be something of a "politician" to deal with the developing American Protestant tradition of including large numbers of laity in the government of the Church. "The dependence of the clergy upon their government made Protestantism in the United States particularly vulnerable to the ways of society."[74]

The immensity of the missionary task caused a transition in many of the churches from a voluntary society to the Church as a missionary organization. In these transitions there was little concern for the nature of the Church, with the result that there was here another indication of the general decline of ecclesiology in American Protestantism. Earl MacCormac has analyzed the factors which produced this transition and its peculiar results:

> The influence of the Enlightenment through Deism and of the Evangelical Awakening undercut the corporate sense of the Church by placing the emphasis upon the individual. In addition, the equality of all American Protestant denominations meant that each had to rely upon the persuasion of "individuals." These factors combined to produce a voluntaryism. In each transition, therefore, the ecclesiastical missionary organization was the administration of a voluntary association i.e. the church. By appealing to individuals, both the early voluntary missionary societies and the later ecclesiastical Boards were alike.
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> Even denominations in the high-Church tradition experienced a diminishing sense of the Church. When the Old School formed the Board of Foreign Missions, a doctrine of the Church did form part of the justification for the affirmation that the Church was a missionary society. The usual Calvinist division of the Church into that which is visible and that which is invisible was held. Christ's commandment to

evangelize the world was declared to have been given to the visible Church.[75]

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During the early period of cooperation in voluntary societies, both Congregationalists and Baptists lost a corporate sense of the visible Church, but retained a sense of the universal Church invisible. Participation in voluntary societies was the natural missionary expression of these "free-churches." With the decline of Evangelical spirit, even this sense of an invisible Church was lost. Instead, by 1840 the Puritans corporate sense of the Church had been replaced by a belief in the free and autonomous local church. Congregationalism was no longer a "Church" but merely a group of "churches." This was justified as a restoration of the New Testament concept of the Church, a process, according to Mead, that was characteristic of the general tendency of American Protestantism.[76]

1. The Rising Tide of Protestant Christianity

In spite of the low state of Christianity and the decline of ecclesiology at the beginning of the nineteenth century there were signs of an inherent vitality, and a rising tide of Protestant Christianity. By 1833 the complete separation of church and state had become an almost unquestioned postulate of most Americans. Lyman Beecher's great discovery was that the separation of church and state in Connecticut was the best thing that ever happened in Connecticut. A variety of viewpoints were held by different observers of the American scene, but the observation of Frances Wright in 1820, demonstrates that the voluntary system had not robbed the churches of their inherent vitality:

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[75] *Ibid.*, p. 303.

[76] *Ibid.*, p. 306.

> Yes, it is somewhat curious to see how travellers contradict each other. One says things are white, and another that they are black; some write that the Americans have no religion, and others that they are a race of fanatics. One traveller tells us that they are so immersed in the affairs of the republic as not to have a word to throw at a stranger, and another, that they never think about politics at all and talk eternally.
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> One may well ask what he is to believe, but he flatters me too much if he be willing to refer the matter to my decision. He may argue this, however, for himself; if the Americans had no religion, it is presumed that they would have no churches, and if they were a race of fanatics, it is equally to be presumed that they would force people to go into them. We know that they have churches and do not force people to go into them, nor force people to pay for them, and yet they are paid for and filled.[77]

There was a revival of interest in religion during the thirties and forties but the idea remained unchanged that the relation of the church to the state should be that of separation.[78] This free Church system is seen by Winfred E. Garrison as the result of a profound revolution in the history of the Church. He writes:

> On the administrative side, the two most profound revolutions which have occurred in the entire history of the Church have been these: first, the change of the church, in the fourth century, from a voluntary society having in its membership only those who were

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[77] Frances Wright, op. cit., Letter XXIV (New York, 1820), p. 223.

[78] Carl Russell Fish, op. cit., p. 181.

> members by their own choice, to a society conceived as necessarily coextensive with the civil community and endowed with the power to enforce the adherence of all members of the civil community; second, the reversal of this change. That reversal was completed in America.[79]

Scholars, like Philip Schaff, imbued with the theological and cultural heritage of Europe saw the "sect system" as a great evil because it contradicted the idea of the unity of the church. Yet Schaff clearly admitted that compulsion, in matters of religion, produces hypocrisy and infidelity. "It is a fact," he wrote, "that the civil equality of all churches and sects in America, and the voluntary system inseparable from it, have aroused and are sustaining a great mass of individual activity and self-denial for religious purposes, and an uncommon rivalry."[80] Schaff saw the "sect system" as connected with the predominance of the Reformed type of religion where the Protestant features, and the subjective, individualizing principle, are most prominent. His illustration of the vitality of the American churches was addressed to a German audience but it displays his wonderment at the multitude of churches, ministers, colleges, theological seminaries, and the benevolent institutions which were founded and maintained by free-will offerings.

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[79] Winfred E. Garrison, "Characteristics of American Organized Religion," Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, CCLVI (March, 1948), 17.

[80] Philip Schaff, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-11.

> In Berlin there are hardly forty churches for a population of four hundred and fifty thousand of whom, in spite of all the union of church and state, only some thirty thousand attend public worship. In New York, to a population of six hundred thousand, there are over two hundred and fifty well-attended churches, some of them quite costly and splendid, especially in Broadway and Fifth Avenue. In the city of Brooklyn, across the East River, the number of churches is still larger in proportion to the population, and in the country towns and villages, especially in New England, the houses of worship average one to every thousand, or frequently, even five hundred, souls. If these are not Gothic cathedrals, they are yet mostly decent, comfortable buildings, answering all the purposes of the congregation often even far better than the most imposing works of architecture.
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> The voluntary system unquestionably has its great blemishes. It is connected with all sorts of petty drudgery, vexations, and troubles, unknown in well endowed Established Churches. Ministers and teachers, especially among the recent German emigrants in America, who have been accustomed to State provision for religion and education, have very much to suffer from the free system.
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> But, on the other hand, the voluntary system calls forth a mass of individual activity and interest among the laity in ecclesiastical affairs, in the founding of new churches and congregations, colleges and seminaries, in home and foreign missions, and in the promotion of all forms of Christian philanthropy.[81]

Another aspect of the inherent vitality and rising tide of Protestant Christianity in the middle period was the millennial fervor aroused by the theme of the kingdom of God. Much of this ferment was to be found among strange sects and cults which arose in the "burned-over district" of western New York. However, the preoccupation with the imminent return of Christ was not a purely sectarian phenomenon for it was prevalent among the orthodox clergy as well. There was growing a merger of the idea of the kingdom of God as the religious counterpart of the secular optimism derived from the American environment. What had begun with the Puritan "errand into the wilderness" was now being fulfilled in America's territorial expansion and the quickening pace of revivals and benevolent societies in, and along side, of the Church. What Professor Bodo writes concerning the theocrats may stand for all those who, like Finney, shared in the evangelical synthesis.

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[81] Ibid., pp. 78-79.

> If the theocrats adapted themselves easily to American territorial expansion, in spite of their opposition to the means by which this expansion might be carried out at times, it was because they were filled with a vision of America's world role. This vision represented the final working out of their belief in the United States as God's New Israel. It originated with the Puritan founders of New England, merged with the exuberant optimism of the Enlightenment, and reached its peak in their reaction to the European revolutions of 1848.[82]

The world seemed on the very brink of evangelical transformation to Beecher and to scores of his fellow ministers who burst into tears of joy during reports of the Commissioners for Foreign Missions; and America was the harbinger of

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[82] John R. Bodo, op. cit., p. 233.

Christ's reign.[83] This exalted role of America in the coming of the kingdom of God was seen by Philip Schaff as a significant part of the plan of God in which all history relates to the history of the church.

> But America has also equally as great a prospective significance and mission for the internal and external development of the kingdom of God. The history of the world is only the vestibule to the history of the church, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, preparing the way for Him, who shall come. All political events and revolutions, all discoveries and inventions, all advances in art and science; in fine, all that belongs to the kingdom of the Father and is under the guidance of the general providence, must serve the Son and spread abroad his name, until the whole world is filled with his glory, and all nations walk in the light of eternal truth and love.[84]

This sense of mission and the vitality it engendered was enhanced by the great variety in the religious pluralism which developed in the absence of a state church, and the presence of legal toleration. There was an interpenetration of one kind of Christianity by another, an impatience with the divisions within the Church, and the beginnings of cooperation between denominations in revivals, benevolent societies, and missions. Professor Latourette remarks that, "The effects [of this variety] were most conspicuous in the Protestantism of the older stock, partly because it had been longest subjected to the American environment."[85] "Protestant

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[83] Barbara M. Cross (editor), op. cit., p. xxiii.

[84] Philip Schaff, op. cit., p. 212.

[85] Kenneth S. Latourette, op. cit., p. 436.

Christianity," he concludes, "entered the nineteenth century on a rising tide"; a century which was a time of "unequalled expression of the vitality inherent in the Christian faith."[86]

The call of the ministry was more frequently heard in the twenties and thirties than in the preceding generation. It was not the call to a mystic sainthood, rather it was a call to rigorous service along the evangelical front. Also, it was a profession that offered certain social distinction otherwise unavailable to "poor and indigent youth." The usefulness of the ministry was increasingly judged by the evangelical standards of revivalism and voluntary societies. The total number of young men attracted to the ministry increased, but the total number of ministers was never sufficient for the expanding church and mission enterprise. More and more women also found a place of service outside the home and in the church and voluntary societies.[87] If religion became the predominant preoccupation of the women, politics was that of the men. But, the rising tide of religious concern enveloped all. Professor Fish remarks that, "It was not merely that the interest in religion itself was stronger than in the preceding generation, but that the union between religion and morality was so strong that they became practically indistinguishable, and that almost every subject was invested with the religious qualities of certainty and enthusiasm. Every orator had to prove that his position was endorsed by the Constitution and the Bible."[88] The loss of prestige which the clergy suffered during the first two decades of our national existence[89] was partially overcome by the "explosion of religious militancy" in the twenties and thirties. This new religious development may be attributed to the revivalism of Finney, as in the analysis of Henry F. May:

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[86] Ibid., pp. 458-459.

[87] Cf., Carl Russell Fish, op. cit., p. 180.

> The spark that actually touched off this explosion of religious militancy was the revival of the mid-twenties, led by Charles Grandison Finney. Ordinarily, the recurrent revivalism which is so striking a feature of American religious history leads its followers away from organized movements and toward a personal search for salvation. Finney, however, held a special position in the great argument over the nature of a revival experience. To him a mystical conviction of salvation was to be understood as a fit beginning for religious effort, rather than as a mere assurance of election, passively received. It was, according to Finney, proof of a "seared conscience" when one was apathetic to questions concerning one's own well-being or that of others. Such questions included "abolition of slavery, temperance, moral reform, politics, business principles, physiological and dietetic reforms," etc.[90]

Another aspect of this inherent vitality and rising tide of Protestant Christianity may be seen in its association with democracy, wherein the mode of life is one primarily directed toward action rather than primarily interested in structure. One of the critical problems of this dynamic American expression of Christianity is the tendency, clearly present in the middle period, toward a "Culture-Protestantism." H. Richard Niebuhr's summary statement seems to have peculiar relevance for the religious patterns taking shape during the period under study:

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[88] *Ibid*., p. 179.

[89] John R. Bodo, *op*. *cit*., p. 9.

[90] Henry F. May, *Protestant Churches and Industrial America* (New York: Octagon Books, Inc., 1963; first published, New York: Harper & Brothers, 1949), p. 22.

> Democracy, however, has also thrown Protestantism, along with every other form of faith, on its own resources, unsupported by any government. Under these circumstances Protestantism, much divided, without a long tradition, loosely related to its Old World organizations, has become a highly adaptive religion tending to forfeit its own character in adjusting itself to the wishes and felt needs of the people on whom it depends for support. It is said to have become a "Culture-Protestantism" in which all inner direction was lost as the price of conformity was paid for the sake of survival. Thus democratic freedom, it may be argued, has led Protestantism toward anarchic pluralism, and to dependence on the voice of the people rather than on the Word of God.[91]

In spite of this "anarchic pluralism" there emerged a kind of "core Protestantism" as a consequence of various integrating and harmonizing tendencies which developed in the revivalism and benevolent societies of evangelicalism, and the shifting patterns of the more churchly denominationalism.

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[91] H. Richard Niebuhr, "Protestant Movement and Democracy in the United States," The Shaping of American Religion, Volume I, Religion in American Life, edited by James Ward Smith and A. Leland Jamison (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1961), p. 51.

"The considerable diversity present in the central, unifying organization of interlocking activities, of interweaving interests and ideas," remarks H. Richard Niebuhr, "is probably no greater than that which is contained within ecclesiastical structures that appear to be more nearly monolithic."[92]

2. The Evangelical Alignment

One of the specific religious patterns which brought about an awakened Church was the alignment of Jeffersonian Republicanism and evangelical Protestantism. The woeful prophecies of Federalism fell into disrepute as the Republicans "pointed proudly to the marriage of Jeffersonian democracy to evangelical Protestantism."[93] The cause of organized deism languished, and only a few followers remained at the time of Paine's death in 1809.[94] The growing dislike of Calvinism in New England was expressed by certain radicals in a militant anti-Christian viewpoint, and by other liberals in the Congregational Unitarianism which reconciled the ardor of a new faith to the comforts and designs of an old society.

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[92] Ibid., p. 65.

[93] G. Adolf Koch, Republican Religion: The American Revolution and the Cult of Reason (New York: Henry Holt & Company 1933), p. 128.

[94] Ibid., p. 168.

G. Adolf Koch has determined that the difference between the radicals and the liberals was a social difference. "Roughly, they agreed in theory," he writes, "and all alike had been influenced by the rationalism and naturalism of the Age of Enlightenment. They were all at least tinged with deism. But they differed in the practical application of the new philosophy . . . . The distinction between liberalism and radicalism is very real. It is primarily a social difference."[95] The "triumph of fidelity" which marked the beginning of the nineteenth century was largely the work of men, says Koch, "who socially and politically were Republicans." He further states, "The same uncalculating and unreasoning emotionalism which had characterized the exhuberant American republicanism in the heyday of the French Revolution was decorously transferred to a new channel--evangelical revivalism."[96] By 1800 it was said that "God was shaking the valley of dry bones on the frontiers." Hundreds experienced a "spiritual resurrection," and among them were many who had been avowed infidels and Universalists. "Thus," writes Koch, "the century which was just closing, and which had threatened to close with dark and dismal prospects, was destined to leave behind it a brighter record. A new era had dawned upon the Church--

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[95] Ibid., p. 185.

[96] Ibid., p. 275.

an era of revivals."[97]

The change at the College of New Jersey came in 1814, later than in New England, but it was equally inevitable. Here, again, revivalism seemed to be the spiritual counterpart of republicanism in politics. Koch concludes that, "The *elan vital* of them both was democracy, freedom, faith and optimism--the dominant characteristics, in short, of the great American frontier."[98] Revivalism did for the lower classes what unitarianism did for the elite in New England, it saved them, and the new nation, from the union of deism and republicanism.[99]

Evangelicalism became the fundamental pattern of religion in the middle period; it was a type of liberalism aligned at first with the Republicans, and then it was seen alongside the forward-moving tides of Jacksonian democracy. Charles I. Foster suggests that it designates a "clearly defined religious party exhibiting at times the potential of becoming a political party as well."[100] Evangelicalism focused on the conviction of man's depravity and his consequent need of salvation. There was a conviction that the emotional paroxysm of revivals was crucial to redemption, and that Christian nurture and discipline led to grace, but were not in themselves effective. From this attitude developed an informality of worship, a disregard of ritual and symbolism; for the evangelicals' relations with God were immediate, warm and intimate. Further, evangelical conversion carried with it a personal commitment to proselyte and, especially with Finney, to support the voluntary benevolent societies.[101]

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[97] *Ibid.*, pp. 278-279.

[98] *Ibid.*, p. 281.

[99] *Ibid.*, p. 297.

[100] Charles I. Foster, *op. cit.*, p. viii.

The two chief trends of evangelism were, then, the impulse towards a personal religious experience which manifested the conversion and transformation of the individual, and the impulse towards social reform.[102] The theological support for this evangelical revivalism and social reform was adopted, particularly among the Congregationalists and the Presbyterians, from the restatement of Calvinism by Edwards, and then Hopkins, which stressed the doctrine of "disinterested benevolence." Also, there was a practical, Biblical approach to theology which challenged the old Calvinistic dogmatism and received dynamic support in the effects of the awakenings of the middle period.[103] The moral and religious sanctions of evangelical Protestantism were regarded as the only adequate check on the boisterous and surging population which threatened barbarism on the frontier and in the growing urban societies. This was especially true during the Jacksonian era.[104]

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[101] Ibid., p. viii.

[102] Latourette relates these two trends to the broader patterns of Protestant development through Lutheran pietism and the radical elements of Protestantism in Great Britain. In the United States these trends were reinforced by a "fluid society and the relative freedom from the dead hand of the past presented by the new nation to come to even more vigorous life."

Evangelicals soon became disenchanted with the political rebuff they received at the hands of Jacksonian democrats. Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. has traced clearly this development in his Age of Jackson. He writes:

> In 1838 a work appeared in New York entitled An Inquiry into the Moral and Religious Character of the American Government, which was quickly and widely ascribed to Frelinghuysen. Whether or not he actually wrote it, the argument certainly accorded with his known views. The book was designed to combat the separation of religion and politics. The author gloomily traced the progress of "political irreligion" from Jefferson's refusal to recommend a day of humiliation and prayer in 1807 through the episode of the Sunday mails to Jackson's refusal to declare a fast day in 1832. "The evil is spreading. . . . The whole land is infected." Religion "is everywhere politically set at nought."
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> Only by placing religious persons in high office could the nation be saved from the ravages of radicalism. "Without religion, law ceases to be law, for it has no bond, and cannot hold society together."[105]

The political response of the evangelicals was a new alignment this time with the Whigs. It was a last-ditch stand against the forces which were secularizing the American society.

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[103] Cf. John R. Bodo, op. cit., pp. 11-12.

[104] Ibid., p. 157.

[105] Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., op. cit., p. 352.

> Professor Taylor Lewis even maintained in the American Whig Review that "religion--revealed religion, Christianity--should regulate legislation," and added a defense in principle of persecution for religious heresy, though he judiciously allowed that it might be impracticable in America. . . .
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> Against the Whig theory of the "national religion" the Democrats set up a theory of religious intervention. "Our Constitution recognises in every person," says Richard M. Johnson's Sunday-mail report, the main Jacksonian document on the side of religious liberty, "the right to choose his own religion, and to enjoy it freely without molestation." The state, in other words, was a secular institution, whose single obligation to religion was the guarantee of equal rights to all faiths; it had no title to intervene in the private beliefs of individuals. . . .
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> Jacksonianism thus assisted the growing secularization of society. Its substantial effect was to divert the church toward what many in this century believe its true function; to lead the individual soul to salvation, not to interfere in politics. Religion, the Jacksonians felt, could best serve itself by ending its entangling alliances with political reaction.[106]

3. Centrality of Conversion

Common to evangelical doctrine was the centrality of conversion, and revivals were the chief means to that end. Through the revivals, men like Beecher, Taylor and Finney kept alive the knowledge of God before whom all men, as sinners, were guilty and to whom men owed a perfect obedience. These evangelical revivalists had a program for the coming of Christ's kingdom and each new convert must involve himself in explicit action for the amelioration of society toward that end. Moral suasion grasped the emotional energies freed in the crisis of conversion and turned them to the tasks of the mission of the Church, and of the benevolent societies. Thus, the revivalistic passions did not disintegrate in mystic separation from society nor end in anarchistic, antinomian individualism. Converts were expected to adopt a crusading faith to which nothing human was alien.[107]

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[106] Ibid., pp. 353, 354, 360.

Through the thirties and forties, theological and ecclesiastical conservatism opposed the revivals and the voluntary societies at the same time the political forces of the Jacksonian democrats were advocating non-intervention in politics. The conservative reaction was particularly strong in the Presbyterian Church where Charles Hodge strongly voiced his disapproval. "Through the 1830's and 1840's in the new Princeton Review Charles Hodge gradually disentangled a true Presbyterianism from Taylorism, questioning the Biblical basis for total abstinence, disparaging violent revivals, and increasingly insistent that the way to salvation and reform was

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107. Cf. Barbara M. Cross' discussion of Beecher and revivals, op. cit., p. xxxvi.

through the ordinances and institutions of the Church. By 1832 the Review was ready to give up the 'Utopian' hope of "NATIONAL Institutions."[108]

The re-interpreted Calvinism by Nathaniel Taylor reinforced the centrality of conversion and opened the way for theological support of "new measures" in revivals. Sidney E. Mead remarks in his careful study of the "Connecticut Liberal":

> Conversion was thus a momentous thing. It was the only thing that really mattered for many church people during the time of Taylor's ministry. And Taylor secured conversions. Under his vigorous preaching there was a revival in 1815, followed by others in 1816, in 1820, and in 1821. Leonard Bacon recalled as a day "for which an earnest and willing pastor might well be willing to die," the last day of 1820 when more than seventy persons "old and young and of every condition in life filled these aisles, as they came from their seats to take the vows of God upon them."[109]

A broader interpretation of conversion from the more churchly point of view of Philip Schaff is described to his German audience:

> This confusion of denominations and sects makes very different impressions on the observer from different theological and religious points of view. If he makes all of individual Christianity, and regards the conversion of men as the whole work of the Church, he will readily recieve a very favourable impression of the religious state of things in America. It is not to be denied, that by the great number of churches and sects this work is promoted; since they multiply

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[108] Ibid., p. xxxii.

[109] Sidney E. Mead, op. cit., p. 68.

> the agencies, spur each other on, vie with each other, striving to outdo each other in zeal and success . . . . There are in America probably more awakened souls, and more individual effort and self-sacrifice for religious purposes, proportionally than in any other country in the world, Scotland alone perhaps excepted. This is attributable, at least in part, to the unrestricted freedom with which all Christian energies may there put themselves forth; and to the fact, that no sect can rely on the favor of the State but that each is thrown upon its own resources, and has therefore to apply all its energies to keep pace with its neighbours and prevent itself from being swallowed up.[110]

Revivalism was adopted as the chief means towards conversion almost out of necessity, in addition to the fact that it was the means inherited from the Great Awakening. In 1800 there was less than ten per cent of the people in the United States who were members of any church. Along the vast reaches of the American frontier, and in the tumult of the growing cities, the Church could not be limited to the more stable measures of Christian nurture and pastoral ministry to the old members. In a nation with so small a number of professing Christians, the Church had to direct its ministry towards the conversion of that ninety percent. So it was that waves of revivalism swept the nation. "The three decades before the Civil War were especially marked by this phenomenon," writes Winfred E. Garrison. He goes on to say:

> Neither the more sober denominations, such as Presbyterians and Congregationalists, nor the large eastern centers of population were immune to this

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[110] Philip Schaff, op. cit., p. 98.

> contagion of religious enthusiasm, as witness the spectacular successes of Charles G. Finney in New York, Boston, and Rochester. Conservative Calvinists on one hand and such relatively liberal theologians as Lyman Beecher and Horace Bushnell on the other tried, but in vain, to stem the torrent. It ran its course and, to a great extent, was swallowed up in the greater and more mundane excitement induced by the issues of slavery and secession."[111]

The theological significance of conversion as a consequence of revivals does not exhaust the significance of this religious pattern. As Perry Miller indicates, there was a centripetal power in the revivals which asserted Protestant solidarity in the face of the fragmenting and secularizing forces within the American culture. He writes:

> Thus accepting the liberal consequences of the Revolution in the form of republican governments, and so abandoning the dream of theocracy, and equally surrendering (except for rhetorical flourish) the idea of a people in a national covenant with their Maker, these insurgents proposed to salvage the Protestant solidarity by the main force of spiritual persuasion. They summoned sinners to the convulsions of conversion; what in fact they were doing, even though few understood, was asserting the unity of a culture in pressing danger of fragmentation.[112]

An important element associated with the religious pattern of conversion and revivals was church discipline. Especially on the frontier, the churches acted as a restraining influence upon barbarism. They were, in William Warren Sweet's notable phrase, "the moral courts of the frontier."[113] Church discipline was, in addition, a means to a pure Church and an encouragement to further revivals. Sidney E. Mead illustrates this point in his study of Nathaniel Taylor:

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[111] Winfred E. Garrison, op. cit., pp. 19-20.

[112] Perry Miller, "From the Covenant to the Revival," The Shaping of American Religion, edited by James Ward Smith and A. Leland Jamison, Volume I, Religion in American Life (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1961), p. 354.

> Once having convicted men and brought them into the church, he sought with some diligence to keep them walking in the prescribed path. Hand in hand with revivalism, at least since the time of Jonathan Edwards, has gone the idea of a purified church, partly because the church was conceived as an association of the saved who sought to act as if regenerate, but also because God's Spirit was thought to be wounded and turned away if any unfaithful persons remained in the flock. Improper conduct on the part of even one member was thought to be a hindrance to the outpouring of the Spirit, a bar to revivals, and must be dealt with accordingly. Hence the revivalists have quite generally been strict disciplinarians.[114]

These theological, cultural, and moral elements associated with revivalism in the middle period are patterns of religion which have peculiar significance for Finney's view of the Church and ministry.

4. Congregational and Presbyterian Heritages

In 1801 the Plan of Union was adopted by the Presbyterian General Assembly and the Congregational General Association of Connecticut. Later approved by other general associations in New England, this agreement provided an arrangement for joint missionary and church extension work on the frontier. The Plan of Union had four articles.[115] In the first article all missionaries of the two Churches were strictly enjoined that they should promote a spirit of accommodation. Second, a Congregational church in a new settlement might call a Presbyterian minister and still conduct their discipline according to Congregational principles. In this case, difficulties among the people would be settled by themselves or by a council which they might appoint; difficulties between the church and the pastor would be referred to his presbytery, or, of this was not agreeable, they could be referred to a council equally representing both denominations. The third article spoke to the case in which a Presbyterian church might call a Congregational minister, and still conduct its affairs according to the Presbyterian way. Problems between the church and the pastor would be referred to the minister's association, or to a council as above. The fourth article provided for the situation in which the congregation was partly Congregational and partly Presbyterian.

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[113] William Warren Sweet, "The Churches as Moral Courts of the Frontier," Church History, Vol. 2 (March, 1933), pp. 3-21.

[114] Sidney E. Mead, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

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[115] Minutes of the General Assembly, 1789-1820, pp. 224-225. Cf. Robert Hastings Nichols, Presbyterianism in New York State, Edited and Completed by James Hastings Nichols (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1962), pp. 78-83.

This should be no obstacle to uniting in one church and calling a minister. The church should choose a standing committee to exercise discipline; and appeal from its authority was allowed for the Presbyterian to the Presbytery, or for the Congregationalist to the body of male communicants. Further appeal might be made to the Synod and to the General Assembly by a Presbyterian, with the consent of the church, or by a Congregationalist to a mutual council. Members of the two denominations would continue as such in their association for worship. An important precedent was set in this fourth article, that if a standing committee should send one of its members to the presbytery he should have the same right to sit and act in the presbytery as a ruling elder of the Presbyterian Church. The question of an unordained delegate in presbytery having the rights of a ruling elder was a source of conflict at the time of the Presbyterian schism of 1837.

The Plan of Union was part of a religious pattern which early began to develop within the "New England way." Robert E. Thompson reports that "the Puritans of New England drifted into arrangements which were midway between Presbyterianism and Independency." The result was that the "New England way" became a kind of "Congregationalized Presbyterianism and

Independency."[116] As the home missionary effort to win the West was formulated, the Congregational churches were in the forefront. Through them many of the first societies were formed, and with the Plan of Union they continued to exert a great influence. Finney was very much a part of this religious pattern. Finney's parents (although not confessed Christians) were from the Congregational stock of Connecticut. His early ministry was in the Presbyterian Church, but it was in the Congregational fellowship that he spent the mature years of his life. "From Congregationalism," notes Latourette, "issued several outstanding colleges which . . . had a large part in undergirding with trained leadership the Christianity of the new territories. From it, either directly or indirectly, came the initiative and support for many of the movements which fought the collective evils of the land and strove to make the country's institutions conform more nearly to Christian principles."[117]

The vigor of New England Congregationalism was stimulated by the revivals of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and this revivalism was associated with what is called New England Theology. Jonathan Edwards, Bellamy, Hopkins,

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116. Robert E. Thompson, The History of the Presbyterian Churches in the United States (New York: The Christian Literature Co., 1895), p. 14.

117. Kenneth S. Latourette, op. cit., p. 203.

Timothy Dwight, and their followers, were contributors to this theological heritage, but it was Nathaniel Taylor who gave the New England Theology its decisive trend towards freedom of the will.

> New England Theology, then, was in part the outgrowth of revivalism. Moreover, by keeping some of the features of Calvinism--its emphasis upon the sovereignty of God, the awfulness of sin, and the lost condition of the sinner--but at the same time making more room for the freedom of the individual to accept the salvation offered through Christ, it gave incentive to revivalism. While still stressing the necessity of repentance, it encouraged men to believe that they could repent and need not await, helplessly, the course of the inscrutable predetermination of God. It was the New England Theology rather than the older Calvinism or the intellectual liberalism of Unitarianism which spread on the frontier.[118]

The theological thought of Charles G. Finney was very similar to that of Taylor, and in some respects he was his successor in the development of New England Theology.

It is important to note that Sidney E. Mead has challenged the view that Taylor was the culmination of the process which is the general thesis of Joseph Haroutunian's study, Piety versus Moralism: The Passing of the New England Theology.[119] Mead believes that Taylor did not stand in the Edwardean line, and that Edwardeanism was never the New England Theology. Mead's description of his thesis is as follows:

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[118] Ibid., p. 205.

[119] Joseph Haroutunian, Piety versus Moralism: The Passing of the New England Theology (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1932), passim.

> When I began this study, it was with the common notion that Dwight, Beecher, and Taylor were the theological heirs of the Edwardeans or Consistent Calvinists of the period before the Revolution. But further study seemed to make it more probable that the basis of their thought was a legacy from the Old Calvinists. Theological controversy followed the Second Great Awakening as it had followed the First. The Old and Consistent Calvinists debated the problems raised by the Colonial revivals--the divine permission of sin, man's ability and freedom of choice under the gospel appeal, the status of "unregenerate doings," and the "use of means" to bring men to God, and the use of the term "self-love" to designate natural and neutral powers in unregenerate men to which the revival message might be addressed. The same problems were raised by the revivals following the Revolution. And on every one of these controverted points the New Haven men took what had been Old Calvinist ground--indeed, they used the Old Calvinists' words at times. They were the descendants of the Old Calvinists.
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> This conclusion leads me to suppose that we may soon be called upon to revise radically our common view of the development of religious thought in New England. Recent studies, as, for example, the work of Perry Miller, indicate that the Calvinism of the New England Puritans was already greatly modified by their "Covenant theology." In this view it also appears that the pre-Revolutionary Old Calvinists, not the Edwardeans or Consistent Calvinists, were the direct theological descendants of the Puritans. It seems, then, that the line can be drawn from Puritanism to Old Calvinism to Taylorism, each the system of the dominant party in its era. It is possible, in brief, that Edwardeanism or Consistent Calvinism was never the New England theology.[120]

The heritage of the Presbyterian Church was intermixed with some of the identical elements which are found in the Congregational heritage. The division of the Presbyterian Church in 1741 was the result of forces at work in the life of the colonies, as they were in Great Britain. Indirectly, it was the result of the Great Awakening which, in the words of Robert B. Thompson, "terminated the Puritan and inaugurated the Pietist or Methodist age of American church history."[121] It was the New Side of the schism which seemed to be in tune with these forces, and thus made the greater progress. Just so, it was the New School side of the schism of 1837 in the Presbyterian Church that made the greater gains in vitality, numbers of clergy and members. This schism resulted from antipathies among Presbyterian conservatives to the revivals, the Plan of Union, and the voluntary societies--especially those concerned with anti-slavery and missions.

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[120] Sidney E. Mead, op. cit., pp. viii-ix.

The creative impulse of Christianity produced an awakened Church in the early nineteenth century, but the style of the Church was to a great extent the function of a social class most open to the enthusiasm of revivals. Evangelical Protestantism experienced the "levelling" tendency of the frontier, and a growing populist culture; "the authority of enthusiasm tended to be personal and charismatic rather than institutional."[122] The awakening and conversion of Finney brought to light a figure in whom the spirit of the times is clearly seen.

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[121] Robert B. Thompson, op. cit., p. 34.

[122] Richard Hofstader, op. cit., pp. 57-58. Cf. also passim, pp. 33-58.

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